





MAGDALA

THE STORY OF THE ABYSSINIAN CAMPAIGN OF 1866-7

BY

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BEING THE SECOND PART OF THE ORIGINAL VOLUME ENTITLED
'COOMASSIE AND MAGDALA'

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS FROM DRAWINGS
BY MELTON PRIOR (SPECIAL ARTIST IN ASHANTEE OF THE ILLUSTRATED
LONDON NEWS) AND OTHER ARTISTS, AND A MAP

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PREFACE

'COOMASSIE and MAGDALA : the Story of Two British Campaigns in Africa,' is the title I have chosen for a volume which is a record of two grand successes gained by English soldiers in East and West Africa.

Before proceeding to Abyssinia as a Special Correspondent of the 'New York Herald,' I had been employed for American journals—though very young—in the same capacity, and witnessed several stirring scenes in our Civil War. I had seen Americans fight ; I had seen Indians fight. I was glad to have the opportunity of seeing how Englishmen fought. In Abyssinia I first saw English soldiers prepared for war. What I think of them I have written frankly, and without malice. The story of Magdala was written five years ago.

The record of the Coomassie campaign is dull compared to that of Magdala ; but it is as heroic, and as worthy of our sympathy for the sake of those who fought, who suffered grievous sickness, and died.

Coomassie was a town insulated by a deadly swamp. A thick jungly forest surrounded it to a depth of 140 miles seaward, many hundred miles east, as many more west, and 100 miles north. Through this forest and swamp, unrelieved by any novelty or a single pretty landscape, the British army had to march 140 miles, leaving numbers behind sick of fever and dysentery. Five days' hard fighting ended the march, and

Coomassie was at the mercy of the conquerors, to sack and burn to the ground. When this work was done, the commander of the force was compelled to march his soldiers back again to the sea, to save the remnant from perishing by flood and disease.

Magdala was a town situate on the top of a mountain about 10,000 feet above sea level, amid gigantic mountains, profound abysses lying between them—2,000, 3,000, and even 4,000 feet deep—a region of indescribable wildness and grandeur. It was almost an impregnable stronghold, about 400 miles from the sea, in a strange, weird country, full of peaks and mountains. The scenes which flanked the march bristled with rocks and crags ; but the country was one of the most healthy countries on the face of the earth. The march was full of interesting incidents, more especially as we drew near the end. A battle was fought ; Magdala was taken by assault, then fired, and utterly destroyed. The Emperor committed suicide ; the captives were released ; and the conquerors returned to the sea, flushed with unequalled success, having suffered the smallest loss that could possibly follow an invasion of a hostile country.

A greater contrast could not be made than is presented by the story of the two expeditions which England undertook in Africa, in behalf of her honour, her dignity, humanity, and justice ; and more brilliant successes than attended these two campaigns in hostile countries are not recorded in history.

HENRY M. STANLEY,

Special Correspondent 'New York Herald.'

LONDON: *April 1874.*

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MAP of the portion of **ABYSSINIA**

Traversed by
THE BRITISH EXPEDITION IN 1868
from Amseley Bay to Magdala
to accompany
H. M. STANLEY'S
'MAGDALA'

Scale of English Miles
0 10 20 30 40 50



MAGDALA



CHAPTER I

A BRITISH CAMP—INTRODUCTORY

A MOST extraordinary and novel sight presented itself to me as I landed upon the bunder at Zoulla. Thousands of half-naked coolies were shouting and chanting a barbaric song while they worked under as hot a sun as ever blazed in the tropics, and hundreds of uniformed superintendents, armed with long *cour-baches*, were coercing the labourers under their charge to work. The braying of hundreds of donkeys, the neighing of horses, the whinnying of mules, the lowing of thirsty kine, the shrill shriek of two anomalous locomotives, the noisy roll of rickety cars as they thundered to and fro, caused the scene to appear at the first impression as if a whole nation had immigrated here, and were about to plant a great city on the fervid beach of Annesley Bay. The mountainous piles of stores covered with tarpaulins, the long warehouses, with their roofs of brushwood, filled to the utmost with the *matériel* of war, and the noble bay crowded with majestic transports, steamers, men-of-war, great sailing-packets, tiny tugboats, elegant little yachts, and innumerable Turkish kanjeahs from Mocha, Jeddah, Souakim, and Massowah, flitting about with their swallow-winged sails, only served to heighten the illusion.

It will not be out of place to give here an introductory explanation of the events and causes which led to this assemblage of British soldiers on the Zoulla sands.

An Abyssinian prophecy, uttered ages ago, and handed down from generation to generation, had gathered strength, until the people had come to believe that the fullness of time had arrived, and grew accustomed to expect a Messiah. It became known to an ambitious young fellow named Kussai, the only son of a widow, a kousso-seller dwelling in Kuara, west of Dembea. The prophecy rang in his ears day after day and month after month.

It haunted him in his dreams and in his waking hours, until he finally became imbued with the belief that he was the chosen instrument who should deliver Canaan from the Moslems.

The prophecy was as follows :

‘And it shall come to pass that a king shall arise in Ethiopia, of Solomon’s lineage, who shall be acknowledged the greatest on earth, and his power shall extend over all Ethiopia and Egypt. He shall scourge the infidels out of Palestine, and shall purge Jerusalem clean from the defilers ; he shall destroy all the inhabitants thereof ; and his name shall be THEODORUS.’

Kussai, being a kinsman of Dembea’s governor, Dedjatch Comfu, was accorded instruction which otherwise, in his plebeian rank, he would never have received. Upon finishing his education, which was limited to learning the arts of reading and writing, young Kussai was persuaded to enlist under Dedjatch Comfu’s banner, with a promise of swift promotion. Great qualities became immediately apparent in him. His conduct as a soldier was such as to call forth his kinsman’s warmest admiration. Comfu promoted him to a captaincy, and he began to regard him as one of his most faithful adherents. Distinguished valour and a quickness of comprehending the best points of a battle-field, which he exhibited in a fierce engagement in the neighbouring province of Begemder during an expedition there, accelerated his further promotion, and endeared him greatly to the governor, insomuch that he gave Kussai his favourite daughter in marriage, and appointed him governor of a district.

After a short period of faithful service, during which he felt his way carefully, Kussai suddenly threw off the mask, and declared war against his kinsman and benefactor.

Dedjatch Comfu mustered his troops and marched against the rebel. In a pitched battle his army was defeated with great slaughter, and he himself killed by the hand of Kussai, who thereupon marched upon Gondar, the capital of Dembea, numbering some sixty thousand inhabitants, as some travellers will have it, which city capitulated without bloodshed to the conqueror. Upon this event he proclaimed himself governor of the province, marched an army he had trained to the other districts, and subjugated them in succession, replacing the district governors with faithful captains of his army.

He was now fairly established upon his gubernatorial chair, and by his heroic conduct in the field and the extraordinary celerity of his movements, ascribed by some of the most superstitious to supernatural ubiquitousness, and after a year of peace, following up the principle of training soldiers to war, and inuring

them to a martial life, he found cause to quarrel with the Governor of Begemder. Forthwith he marched his army into the country, and after repeated victories in that mountainous country the Begemder troops, commanded by the governor, were conquered, and all put to the sword except the governor, whom Kussai consigned to one of the State prisons of that province. Upon the news of his victory spreading abroad, the chiefs of the neighbouring provinces made common cause against him.

Before proceeding to meet his enemies, who were indeed numerous, he augmented his own army considerably by proclaiming his name to be Theodorus (pronounced 'Todoros' by the natives), of the line of Solomon, and declaring that he was the Messiah whom the prophecy foretold should come and destroy the Mohammedan nations.

This proclamation had a wider effect than even he could have imagined. Deserters from the other provincial armies flocked to his standard, and, considerably elated by his prospects, he marched to give battle. This assumption of 'Todoros,' or Theodore as we must now call him, the governors who were inimical to him at first affected to laugh at and regard in the light of a good joke; but when they found their legions reduced to mere skeletons by wholesale desertion, and heard through their spies of the growing power of their ambitious enemy, they altered their tone. Some laid down their arms and resigned submissively to him; others advanced to meet him, but were all defeated, and those who were not slain in battle were sent to keep company with the Governor of Begemder in the living tomb in the Begemder mountains. Thus one province after another was subjugated, until the whole of Abyssinia, with the exception of Tigre, claimed Theodore as master. It was after these victories that he assumed the name and title of EMPEROR THEODORUS BY THE POWER OF GOD. This took place in the year 1851.

When he had made himself master over all Abyssinia he was about thirty-five years old, in the vigour of lusty manhood, active, brave as a lion, and beloved, nay, almost adored, by all war-loving soldiers.

Having acquired from historical and traditional accounts of past governments, and from his own experience, a knowledge of the intrigues and dangers which beset an Abyssinian crown, he conceived a distaste for life in the city of Gondar. He said to himself, 'I will have no capital; my head shall be the empire, and my tent my capital.'

His talents and military ability enabled him to successfully repress all revolutions. The Gallas were many times defeated,

but they were such roving nations that he was unable to make his victories good. He could only make his name dreaded, and command peace with them by his prowess.

Merchants were invited to Abyssinia, and manufactures were encouraged. European workmen, hearing of his liberality, flocked in numbers to Gondar, where they received employment and riches. Military men were also regarded with special favour, and many were the travellers who were invited to reside in the country.

Consul Plowden was a great favourite with him, and resided with Theodore five years, during which time the emperor strengthened his power and government in every possible way. But though he was undoubtedly a great soldier, far in advance of his people, he knew not the way to make his victories subserve the interests of the country. No sooner was he conqueror of a rebel province than he was compelled to overrun another, and in the war he was continually harassed, until gradually his whole nature changed. He became embittered at the ingratitude of the people whose welfare he so ardently desired, and for whom he laboured so assiduously.

Some Russian and German engineers came to the country, and they requested service with him. They told him of the wonderful cannon and monstrous mortars they could make, until his imagination rioted in the belief that the time was drawing nigh when he could undertake his contemplated conquest of Egypt, Palestine, and Arabia. As he looked for means to effect his darling project, he at once closed with the offer.

Large powder manufactories were erected, Greek merchants were commissioned to buy muskets for him, and foundries were constructed for the casting of cannon, and all augured well for his prosperity.

Theodore regarded the Viceroy of Egypt as his most deadly enemy. Aggressions were frequently committed by the Egyptians, and captured Abyssinians were taken down the Nile and sold as slaves to the Pachas of Cairo and Alexandria, while many were shipped to their worthy brothers in Constantinople. Nor were these the least of the crimes committed by the Egyptians.

When Mr. Plowden was appointed consul, it must be distinctly remembered that it was to Abyssinia he was accredited, and his position, therefore, was with the reigning monarch. The monarch happened to be the Emperor Theodore. Through his kindness of heart and desire to cultivate friendship and amity between the English Government and Theodore, he won the latter's affection and goodwill. His duties in the interior of Abyssinia were to

'watch and counteract foreign intrigue, to suppress the slave trade, and to promote commerce as much as lay in his power.' Towards these objects, he urged upon Theodore to send an embassy to England, that the Legation might be able to see for itself how advantageous commercial relations between the two countries would be. But the Emperor was so perpetually engaged in war that he found it impossible to pay the attention to it that the subject demanded.

Consul Plowden was killed by some of the rebel chiefs' forces while on a journey to Massowah in March 1860. Theodore mourned for him greatly, and punished the rebels who were the cause of his death. For his kindness to the consul, Queen Victoria sent several presents to him, among which was a revolver, whereon the following was inscribed on a silver plate upon the stock : 'Presented to Theodore, Emperor of Abyssinia, by Victoria, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, for his kindness to her servant, Plowden, 1861.' These presents were carried to him by Plowden's successor, Captain Cameron, a gentleman who had formerly served in India as a commissioned captain in her British Majesty's service.

Theodore still followed up the idea of manufacturing cannon, and one after another was turned out of the foundry, tested, and proved to his unbounded delight to be terrible weapons of warfare, by their tremendous noise and the huge shot that they hurled out of their wide mouths. Certainly the day was coming when he would be able to make war upon the cursed Egyptians.

Egypt under Abbas Pacha was a very poor, disorganised country, and it was not until Said Pacha ascended the viceregal throne that it visibly improved, and began to be the compact Power that it now is.

On February 9, 1862, Captain Cameron, the new consul, arrived in Abyssinia, and presented himself before Theodore with his credentials, and, better than all, with rich presents. The Emperor was dressed in royal robes, and surrounded by gorgeous functionaries of state.

The same kindness and courtesy extended to Plowden were shown to Cameron, and all things for a while went well. Soon after the Rev. Mr. Stern and the Rev. Mr. Rosenthal, missionaries, arrived, and were equally well received. Other missionaries also found their way there by-and-by from the Scottish Mission and the Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews. They were all welcomed by the emperor.

It was at this time that his cruelties began to be notorious. The disaffections of the provinces embittered his life greatly ; his

whole nature underwent a violent change. He also began to lead a very intemperate life, and in his drunken fits his atrocities were absolutely fiendish. Brands were impressed upon the foreheads of deserters, and traitors were laid on the ground and stakes driven through their hearts.

Severe punishments for treason are common enough in the history of civilised nations ; but Theodore practised his cruelties upon innocent people. The least suspected had his back flayed with the *courbach*, or had his stomach ripped open. People were crucified and shot without mercy, and in consequence his name began to be execrated by all his subjects.

A short while previous to the arrival of the British consul in Abyssinia, Earl Russell withdrew British protection from the Abyssinian Convent at Jerusalem, at the same time that a commissioned agent was *en route* to the Emperor of Abyssinia, whose favour was certainly worth cultivating while the Government incurred the expense of sending an agent there ; but Lord Russell thought otherwise.

Consul Cameron, according to instructions, followed in the footsteps of his predecessor, and urged the emperor to agree to an amicable treaty between the two nations, and entreated him to send an embassy to the Queen of England.

Theodore finally did consider upon the subject. He wrote a letter to Queen Victoria, wherein, after the usual grandiloquent phrases of Abyssinian emperors were passed, he declared his intention of attacking the Turks (or the Egyptians, which are precisely the same in the Abyssinian language) for their unprovoked attacks upon his people at Bogos, and for their repeated depredations, which were as unwarrantable as they were unjust, and for many other things, all clearly told and succinctly set forth. In the same letter he expressed a hope 'that lasting goodwill may exist between their two countries, which must redound to the glory and advantage of both,' and at the close of the missive he requested her Majesty to prepare the means whereby his ambassadors may reach England, 'for so soon as he shall be made acquainted that all is ready, the embassy shall proceed to the sea-coast.'

Consul Cameron, while on his way to Massowah, was stopped by some rebel chief, but he contrived to send the letter of the king by a native courier.

The letter arrived in England safely in February 1863, was received by Earl Russell, opened, read, thrown upon the table, docketed, and in the pigeon-hole it rested.

The consul was released after a short confinement among the rebels ; and he afterwards interested himself in the suppression

of slavery, until he became a very thorn in the side of the Pacha. Representations and complaints from the Pacha to Earl Russell were immediately attended to. Said Pacha was consoled with for his inconvenience, and Cameron was told to deport himself to Massowah, an Egyptian trading port near Annesley Bay, and there 'to follow the occupation of his consular duties.'

Not long afterwards, as the war in America caused great distress in England, and a new field for growing cotton was eagerly sought after, the Foreign Office sent instructions to Cameron to visit the Soudan and report on the prospects and capabilities of that country for the purpose.

The visit of Cameron to an Egyptian province was interpreted wrongly by Theodore. When they met again the emperor questioned him in a cold, imperious tone as to where he had been ; to which the consul replied that he had been sent to the Soudan to find out about the prospects of cotton-growing and trade. Theodore asked him if he had brought him an answer from the Queen to his letter, which he had sent nearly a year before. Cameron replied in the negative, and Theodore flew into a passion, and said that since 'the Queen could send him to visit his enemy the Turks, perhaps to conspire against him, and could not write a civil answer to a civil letter, then he [Cameron] should not leave him until the answer came.' Thus, in July 1863, Cameron became a prisoner. Not long after the answer from the French Government arrived. Very unsatisfactory, it seems, were the contents, for the French consul, Munsinger, was hustled out of Abyssinia immediately.

Three months after his imprisonment Cameron received an answer from Lord Russell.

But the excellent old statesman had forgotten one important point—there was no allusion to the request of Theodore, nor even a word in reference to his letter. Maddened at the slight, the emperor ordered Cameron's servant to be beaten. At the same time the missionary Stern's two servants were beaten so cruelly that they both died the following night. The poor missionary, horrified at the spectacle, put his hand on his mouth to repress the rising cry of horror. This simple movement was understood by the suspicious emperor as a revengeful threat, and he at once cried out to his men : 'Beat that man ; beat him as you would a dog ; beat him, I say.' The soldiers at once fell upon him, threw him upon his face on the ground, and they beat him with their sticks until he fainted. From this month of October Missionary Stern dates his long imprisonment.

In the employ of the emperor was a Frenchman named

Bardel. He was particularly conspicuous for his hatred to all Englishmen, and he suggested to Theodore that he should open the missionaries' trunks and make a search among their papers to find out their real business in the country.

All Europeans in Abyssinia, particularly Englishmen, were regarded with suspicion by Theodore. He ascribed the silence of Queen Victoria to the representations of Stern, and the indifferent letter from the Emperor Napoleon to European intrigues. Indeed, he had cause to think so.

The vice-consul, or assistant to Cameron at Massowah, was a Captain Charles Speedy, a man fully six feet six inches in height. After a year's trial of consular duties at Massowah, he gave them up, and started for the interior of Abyssinia to shoot elephants. He was accompanied by a young cousin of his named Kerens, an Irishman by birth. It seems they were both highly successful in the pursuit of 'big game,' and Speedy, from his gigantic size and strength, acquired quite a reputation. When Cameron commenced the term of his imprisonment, Speedy arrived at the emperor's court. His herculean proportions excited the admiration of Theodore. He was invited to serve him in the capacity of a centurion. Speedy won his favour, but not to the same degree that Plowden did formerly.

The emperor had lost much of the impulsive kind-heartedness that was once his prominent characteristic. In a battle the English centurion distinguished himself so much by his desperate courage and great strength that Theodore made him a commander of a thousand men and called him by the prenomens of Basha—'Basha Felecca,' or the *Speedy* commander. Speedy by-and-by became ambitious, or at least Theodore's ministers thought so, and many intrigues were put in operation to oust the white favourite. Basha Felecca had a Turkish scimitar, the gift of an Indian rajah, with him. With this weapon, a pure Damascus blade, he used to amuse Theodore with splitting sheep in two from head to tail, which feat no Abyssinian could imitate. By such strength-of-hand work he kept Theodore's attachment to himself for a long time.

After residing with the emperor some eighteen months, Speedy was despatched on an expedition to Gondar. While on the way thither he was met by a dozen men, under the leadership of Ras Feet Ourarie Guvrie, who for some reason—probably jealousy—hated him thoroughly. He was commanded by the Ras to give up his arms and return with him to Theodore, who was at Debra Tabor. Speedy demurred, and invited the Ras to come and take his arms, warning him at the same time that if he came within

reach of his arm he would split him in two with his scimitar in the same way as he had seen him split sheep. The Ras said that he did not want to have recourse to violence. 'Well, then,' replied Speedy, with an ominous flourish of his keen weapon, 'return to your master, and tell him that so soon as I finish my duties at Gondar I shall return to him.'

Basha Felecca went on his way, and Ourarie Guvrie returned to the emperor's camp, where he enlarged upon Speedy's obstinacy, and gave in detail a long story of the meeting and conversation he had had with him, which, according to Guvrie, was not complimentary to his Majesty.

In the course of time, after he had closed the Gondar business with full satisfaction to the emperor and himself, Speedy presented himself before Theodore at his camp on Debra Tabor (Debra means mountain), and the following dialogue is said to have taken place between them :

Speedy. 'Well, I have come back.'

Theodore. 'I see you have ; why did you not come when I sent for you ?'

Speedy. 'Because I did not believe you could reward faithful services by punishment.'

Theodore. 'What ! did Ourarie Guvrie tell you that I was going to punish you ?'

Speedy. 'He did.'

Theodore. 'Then he told you more than I knew myself.'

Speedy. 'That may be very true ; but I have finished your business at Gondar well and faithfully ; I now ask for my pay and a discharge from your service.'

Theodore. 'Oh, no, that cannot be. I cannot part with the best soldier in my army.'

Speedy. 'King, you may be a great man ; you may have a heart and reason ; but though I am not a king, I have a heart and reason also. When I came here first you requested my service, promising me good pay and promotion. I agreed to serve you ; I have served you faithfully. I have been on the battle-field, and with your own eyes you saw my conduct, and promoted me there and then ; but no money have I received from you since I have been with you. The bread and salt I have eaten I purchased with my own money ; the servants I had I paid out of my own money. While on my road to do your bidding, you, listening to lies told in your ears by such fellows as Ourarie Guvrie, sent men to fetch me back, for what purpose you know best. I demand my money and discharge.'

Theodore. 'And where will you go to ?'

Speedy. 'I will go home.'

Theodore. 'Suppose I choose that you shall not leave the country?'

Speedy. 'Then somebody will get killed, for I will fight, and you know I am not an infant.'

Theodore. 'Will nothing persuade you to remain with me?'

Speedy. 'Nothing. I am tired of the treachery and intrigue that I have seen around me.'

The emperor, finding that nothing would move Speedy's determination to leave, paid all the money that was due to him, gave him a horse, a shield, and a spear, and took an affectionate leave of him.

Captain Speedy, ex-Basha Felecca, took Kerens along with him to Massowah. Young Kerens went to London with a letter from Consul Cameron. Speedy, roving in search of fresh adventures like another Quixote, went to New Zealand, where he was made a captain of militia and distinguished himself in the Maori War. We shall hear soon of him again.

Kerens was despatched back to Abyssinia with a letter from the Foreign Office to Cameron. He arrived in Abyssinia in November 1863. The letter made no mention of having received any communication from Theodore. This long silence, regarded by the emperor as a purposed insult to his dignity, rendered him fiercely indignant; and the consequence of Lord Russell's diplomacy was that Consul Cameron, the missionaries, and attendants were put in chains.

Kerens was also very unfortunate, for he brought a carpet as a present to the emperor, and on the carpet was a picture of Jules Gérard, in Arab costume, about to kill a lion. Theodore fell into a rage at what he regarded as an insulting absurdity. To his oblique vision the lion about to be shot by Jules Gérard represented the 'Lion of the Tribe of Judah' (the Abyssinian crest) about to be conquered by the Egyptians, and Kerens was therefore unmercifully flogged and put in chains with the rest.

Some efforts were made to release the prisoners by philanthropic Englishmen. Mrs. Stern, on being informed of the captivity of her husband, petitioned the Queen to send a letter under the sign-manual to Theodore. Lord Shaftesbury kindly interested himself in their behalf, and presented the letter to the Premier, but it was returned with—'I don't think it advisable that the Queen should write to the Abyssinian Emperor.'

Continued persistence in this harsh policy, if policy we must call it, brought punishments, indignities, and hardships upon the heads of the persons who were languishing in captivity. Theodore

became more morose, and writhed under the insult to his imperial dignity, offered to him, too, by a woman. He avenged himself upon the captives, and most lamentable are the tales of their life in bondage.

With money a man may do anything almost in Abyssinia, and 'Samuel,' a chief who was a great favourite with Theodore, and who had followed Cameron to and fro through Abyssinia before his incarceration, was found amenable to bribes. For money, Aytoo Samuel would undertake to carry letters to Massowah, or secure trustful couriers to convey them for him. In one of these letters thus sent Cameron explained at length the causes of his captivity and his sufferings, and said, 'There is no hope of my release unless a letter is sent as an answer to his Majesty's.'

This letter of Cameron's found its way to the 'Times' newspaper, and then went through all the ramifications of the British Press. The 'Times' censured the Government, and it was echoed with more or less noise by innumerable papers. The Minister succumbed before the storm of indignation. He immediately advised her Majesty to write. The letter was written and sent off.

Mr. Layard, M.P., while pursuing his search for antiquities on the shores of the Tigris, had a secretary who acted as paymaster to his workmen.

This secretary was the Armenian Hormuzd J. Rassam.

When the author of 'Nineveh' arrived in England, he did not forget his paymaster. Rassam in the meantime had found employment with Colonel Merewether, Political Resident at Aden. He confidentially wrote to Layard, and stated his readiness to convey the Queen's answer to Theodore.

The grateful antiquary bestirred himself to get Rassam appointed as the messenger, and was successful, and Rassam was chosen to convey the long-delayed letter. He was accompanied by Lieutenant Prideaux and Surgeon Blanc, both British officers, and his title was 'Envoy Extraordinary.'

When Rassam arrived at Cairo in February 1865, it was discovered that an important feature was omitted in the construction of the State despatch, viz. the Queen's signet. The messenger was recalled. With the document complete, the envoy started anew for Abyssinia, having received instructions to render an explanation of the delay favourable to the English Government.

In due time the envoy arrived at Massowah, but remained there nearly one round year.

During these long weary months the captives languished in

horrible durance. Things went on with them from bad to worse. They were fed on bread and water, beaten, and chained to a wall. Cameron was tortured. He says : 'Twenty Abyssinians tugged lustily on ropes tied to each limb until I fainted. My shoulder-blades were made to meet each other. I was doubled up until my head appeared under my thighs, and while in this painful posture I was beaten with a whip of hippopotamus hide on my bare back, until I was covered with weals, and while the blood dripped from my reeking back I was rolled in sand.' Yet Rassam lingered at Massowah. In consequence of debates in Parliament, wherein many things leaked out not very complimentary to Layard's *protégé*, Lord Russell found himself obliged to commission Mr. Palgrave, the noted traveller, to proceed to Abyssinia to endeavour to effect the release of the captives, and Rassam was recalled.

The recall found the envoy in Massowah. He at once set out for Suez, and from there he telegraphed to the Consul General at Alexandria that Cameron was released. The glad news was flashed along the cable to England, where it was received by all with joyful hearts. Palgrave's mission was ended, of course, though he had arrived at Cairo. The presents which he had with him he gave to Rassam, who immediately started for Massowah to deliver them, probably to the chiefs who should accompany the released consul to that port.

From Massowah the envoy proceeded to the interior, accompanied by his companions, Blanc and Prideaux, and never halted until he arrived at Debra Tabor, January 28, 1866. The letter of the Queen was not what it ought to be—it was not respectful enough, and Cameron was not released ; but Rassam, Prideaux, and Blanc were added to the batch of captives Theodore already held. Rassam was not beaten, however, and what was lacking of respect in the Queen's despatch Mr. Rassam voluntarily supplied. Theodore's savage bosom was a welcome receptacle to flattery ; and as much kindness as it was possible to exhibit to a prisoner was shown to the envoy. Cameron's condition was bettered also through Rassam's influence.

Three months after the detention of the mission, Mr. Flad arrived in Alexandria, and gave the first information of its fate. Subsequently he returned to Abyssinia, and he also became numbered with the captives.

Theodore perceived his power gliding from his hands. Neither his strength, his ability, the prestige of his former prowess, nor his cruelties, could keep his provinces intact. One by one the governors rebelled. The Gallas mustered their forces and attacked

him in the rear. For a time Theodore bore up stoutly, but the many reverses which he suffered elated his enemies and discouraged himself. But wherever he pitched his camp, there he was impregnable, because of his cannon. His European workmen had manufactured for him twenty cannon, some of them of monstrous size. Monster guns became an infatuation with him. Twelve and fifteen-inch mortars were what his soul delighted in. The roar of their discharge, he calculated, would affright his enemies. The reputation of these huge guns spread abroad through the land, and no army was found bold enough to attack him in his camp, but they rebelled all the same, and his cruel punishments, as he was a rigorous martinet, drove his soldiers away from him by hundreds.

We are now come to the circumstances through which war was declared. The causes have been plainly set forth. The English prisoners were still in captivity. The mission for their release had failed. Where would it all end? Let us see.

In 1866 the Conservative party came into power; the Earl of Derby, the 'Rupert of Debate,' became Premier; Lord Stanley, his son, filled the Foreign Office chair. Before proceeding into extremes the Ministers made one more effort to procure the release of the prisoners by proposing a ransom. This also failed. Theodore, seeing how anxious the British Government was to get the prisoners, thought, as a natural sequence, that the English people submit to anything rather than have them kept in captivity. One part of Theodore's supposition was correct—the English people would indeed do anything rather than the captives should long remain in durance; go to war even, but never help him to keep the throne he had disgraced. And so the Government declared war.

It is remarkable that there was not the least enthusiasm shown by the people of England upon the announcement of war. The least approach to anything like a kindling interest in it brought down upon the unfortunate editors a host of letters croaking about omens, signs and dangers. One correspondent signing himself 'True John Bull' declared it his opinion that not a man of the army would ever return from the country; the 'British taxpayer' saw visions in the heavens; the far-seeing 'Hertfordshire Incumbent' prophesied that the rain would sweep every trooper into the sea; the 'Jolly Briton' affirmed most positively that the British troops could never capture Theodore; while the 'Cambridge Student,' having in his mind's eye Trajan's works, asked whether the general that was to be was to build bridges across the ravines; remarked that if so Abyssinia was not Greece, nor, as a self-evident axiom, was Greece Abyssinia,

and he could not imagine how ravines four thousand feet in depth could be crossed without bridges. This intelligent person also observed that English generals were certainly superior to Trajan, but even they, adopting Trajan's tactics, could never hope to bridge such wide, deep gaps in the earth as Abyssinian ravines.

In short, there was no known horror, danger, or disease, which it was not prophesied would befall the Expedition. The tsetse, the cerastes, the deadly adder, were to be amongst the blankets and clothes of the troops. Physicians warned the soldiers to beware of a certain small pink-headed fly; not to touch honey on the roadside; not to taste any water found in old wells; to look out for ophthalmia; to keep a flannel belt round the waist; to apply instantly for medicine when afflicted with symptoms of diarrhœa, and to make the best they could of the society of hyænas and hippopotami, the common pests of the country. Dysentery, disease, and discomfort were to dog the footsteps of the British rank and file.

Men who had travelled in other countries proposed numberless absurdities, and people who had never travelled anywhere except to the London theatres, drew wise corollaries from their own experiences, which they offered gratis to the Foreign Office. Again, loyal Englishmen offered their services to release the captives by their own unaided efforts. They were all confident they could perform the task without the least danger or inconvenience to themselves. They would undertake to do so simply for the fun of the thing. Others ventured to hope that the Foreign Office would accept a plan which could not fail of success—that of taking a company of cavalry and dashing into the camp of the Abyssinian Emperor, take them off by force; even the 'Times' Special Correspondent avowed his belief that were Colonel Meredith sent with a squadron of cavalry the whole thing could be accomplished in less than a month.

Captain Smelfungus wrote to the 'Times' and Lord Stanley, stating that an English army could not exist in Abyssinia without an auxiliary force of Haoussas to assist as an irregular detachment, to scour the country for forage, and to be sent as scouts ahead of the regular troops. He offered his services as Colonel of the force. As Haoussas are only found near Lagos, the Foreign Secretary could not see how they could be procurable in Abyssinia. But why follow the improbabilities and impossibilities further—are they not all chronicled in the Abyssinian Blue Book? Where was the army to come from? It was decided that they should all be Indian troops, European and

Sepoy regiments serving in Bombay, and England should only supply the stores and baggage animals. Accordingly, Sir Seymour Fitzgerald, the Governor of Bombay, and Sir Robert Napier, Commander-in-Chief of the Bombay Army, after being notified of the decision of the Foreign Office, made their preparations. The army was to consist of about 12,000 soldiers; 2,000 men for the sea dépôt at Zoulla, and Senafe on the Abyssinian Highlands, 2,000 men for the post of Antalo, halfway between Zoulla and Magdala, 2,000 men to keep open communication, and 6,000 men for the marching column.

Officers were despatched to Spain, Egypt, and Syria, to buy animals. The great arsenals of England were to furnish the cannon, saddles, tents, and stores of all kinds. Hospital-ships were to be sent to Annesley Bay for the reception of the sick, and men-of-war were to guard the port of Zoulla.

The plan of the campaign was laid down by Sir Robert Napier with great distinctness. There was no possibility of failure if once Theodore could be found. Sir Robert, himself, chose the regiments, and though the other Presidencies—Madras and Bengal—were anxious to furnish some small portion of the necessary quota, the General thought that, to insure harmony, it would be best the troops should all belong to the same Presidency. The point of debarkation was to be chosen by Lieut.-Colonel Merewether, the Political Resident at Aden, a most gallant, brave, and skilful officer. He surveyed the whole Abyssinian coast. Annesley Bay, though the farthest from Magdala, was chosen for its fine commodious harbour, its proximity to the mountains, and for its water supplies.

The distance from Tajurrah Gulf to Magdala was 150 miles; from Amphilla Bay, 250 miles; Howakil, 325 miles; and from Annesley Bay the distance was a little under 400 miles.

The next step was to procure interpreters who could speak both the English and the Abyssinian languages. The Rev. Louis C. Krapf, an Abyssinian traveller, was selected for one, but he was rather elderly for a campaign. Mr. Henry Dufton, another traveller, professed to know something of the language, and was appointed to the Intelligence Department to help the Commissariat and the Quartermaster-General with his few phrases. His duties were somewhat anomalous. Lord Stanley was finally made acquainted with the name of one who, it was thought, would prove the right person—Captain Charles Speedy, formerly the 'Basha Felecca' of Theodore's army, just then serving as a militia captain in New Zealand. A telegram was sent to him, *via* Bombay, to report himself to Sir Robert Napier

The services which he rendered the English army will be found detailed in the following pages.

In the month of November 1867, the advance force of the Abyssinian Expedition landed upon the beach of Zoulla.

CHAPTER II

ANNESLEY BAY—COLONEL MEREWETHER

ANNESLEY BAY is formed by an island named Dissee running parallel to the coast of Abyssinia for a length of twenty miles, separated from it by the Bay, which is between one and five miles broad.

No better choice could have been made for a pioneer than Lieut.-Colonel W. L. Merewether, a cavalry officer serving in India, and the Political Resident at Aden. This gentleman, probably from previous intimacy with Hormuzd J. Rassam, as soon as he was made aware of his captivity, bestirred himself to release him. He sent money to the prisoners, he bribed Abyssinians to carry despatches to Magdala and Debra Tabor, he wrote several articles in the most influential London journals, he published a treatise or two, calling on Great Britain to save herself from disrepute in India, and threatening that the knowledge of the captivity of the English envoy at Magdala, once known among the Mohammedan tribes of Hindostan, would be the means of exciting a universal rebellion among the subjects of the Queen in the East.

Merewether was selected to command the Pioneer Force, which was to land on the coast of Abyssinia, to institute inquiries among the inhabitants, and to prosecute an examination into the difficulties to be met, and means of access to the country. He lost no time in scouring the coast to seek a landing-place, and planted the Cross of St. George for the first time on it with his own hands.

The Abyssinian coast bordering the Bay was a stretch of sandy beach, fourteen to fifteen miles wide, extending from Mas-sowah, twenty miles above, to far below the southern extremity of Annesley Bay. About three-fourths of the distance from the embouchure of the bay to its extreme southern end, on the low sandy beach, just four miles from the village of Zoulla, Lieut.-Col. Merewether pitched his head-quarters. A more inhospitable-



COLONEL SIR W. L. MEREWETHER, C.B., K.S.I.

looking spot could hardly have been found. But this spot was chosen for two reasons : first, because it bordered a fine deep bay, where the *matériel* of war could easily be landed ; secondly, because a great gap, or a lengthy chasm, splitting the Black Highlands of the interior in two, allowing access to the summit of the table-land, had been found—the entrance to which lay exactly fifteen miles direct west of Merewether's head-quarters.

Colonel Merewether upon landing had despatched his letters, containing the fruits of his investigations, to the Governor of Bombay and Sir Stafford Northcote of the India Office in London ; but unfortunately he had painted the prospects far too glowingly. According to this statement water and wood were abundant, grass was plentiful, the verdure was most refreshing, the Pass to the table-land was comparatively easy, and the country was rich with game of all kinds.

After the receipt of the Colonel's despatches the gentlemen at the India Office in London and the authorities at Bombay vied with each other in getting ready the expedition for this bright and heavenly country. Sir Robert Napier, Lieutenant-General, was chosen as chief of the force. By his advice and counsel the number of men necessary to accomplish the undertaking was fixed upon. The various regiments were collected together at Bombay before starting, and reviewed by the commanding powers.

So much were expectations excited by the glowing reports, that it was proposed to send the soldiers at once to Zoulla, with only a few days' rations ; they limited the supplies in each and every particular to a starving amount, and had it not been for the firm resistance to the nonsense of civilians on the part of Sir Robert Napier, grave and disastrous evils must have ensued.

The Advance Brigade—consisting of head-quarter wing 3rd Light Cavalry, 10th Bombay Native Infantry, 3rd and 4th Companies Native Sappers and Miners—was finally landed at Zoulla, as a garrison and a nucleus for the expected force. With this brigade there were two correspondents of influential English journals—the London 'Times' and the 'Daily News'—and the sufferings which the reporter of the 'Times' underwent were graphically recorded in the columns of that journal.

There was but one brigade landed at Zoulla when several transports, conveying some thousands of mules and camels and horned cattle, without muleteers or drivers to attend them, arrived in the bay and began to discharge their living cargoes. When landed on the beach the animals, unhaltered, roamed around in search of pasturage after their sea voyage, and not finding either grass or water, wandered about in the wilderness of baubool shrubs

and juniper bushes, until they fell down and died by hundreds. Many of them were stolen by the Shohoe natives, and had a smart, cunning horse-dealer been present with a vessel at Mas-sowah, he might have been able to convey the mules and camels away back to India nearly as fast as they were landed in Abyssinia.

It was not until two or three thousand animals had died, or were lost, that the commanding officer began to perceive that a remedy for all this mortality was necessary and easily procurable.

The steam transports then in the Bay were detained, and set to work at once to condense water. A despatch boat was sent to Bombay for a dozen American condensers and two or three score of Norton's American pumps.

Three or four weeks after the order for condensers had been given, they arrived at Zoulla; at the same time several thousand coolies arrived in ships. These were set to work at once to prepare the piers and bunders for the reception of other heavy stores about to be landed.

The piers and bunders were completed in an incredibly short space of time. Then the Stone Island was constructed for one of the largest condensers, and a trough was made to convey the fresh water to the water-butts inshore, where it was collected and stored for use.

The arrangements now determined upon were carried on with vigour; more camels, and mules, and horses, were continually arriving, and though the mortality among the animals was still great, it was evident that it was greatly lessened by the water supply. With these new shipments of animals, which came from Suez, and which had been sent there from Spain, Italy, Syria, and Egypt, came Turkish and Arab muleteers.

Shortly the troops under Colonel Merewether, who were pushing ahead to occupy the Highlands, were made aware that their baggage and commissariat animals had disappeared with their drivers.

The wholesale desertion of men and animals took place daily, until it was remembered soldiers were useful for other purposes than to march in solemn column to the front, and that it would be an extremely wise thing to detail a few to guard the baggage. Experience in all things is dearly bought, and the English army had rusted so long in their barracks in Bombay and Chatham, that very many things appertaining most essentially to campaigning had been forgotten.

Troops were being concentrated rapidly at Zoulla, when, after a reconnaissance of the Pass ahead, the General, Sir Charles Stave-

ley, decided that the head of the Pass—Senafe—a village situated on the Highlands, should be occupied, and be the second depôt on the route to Magdala. A small force was already in possession of the place under Merewether, but as the situation was reported healthier than Zoulla, and fresh water was in plentiful quantity, and grass, and straw, and barley, and oats were procurable from the natives, the major part of the force was also sent on to Senafe.

A passage to the Highlands had been made comparatively easy after a great deal of labour. In order that readers may understand it thoroughly, and to simplify its description, I will state that the Pass of Koomaylee was a deep ravine, cut by the force of torrents across several ranges of mountains from the Highlands of Senafe, which rose 7,000 feet above the level of the sea. This pass or ravine descended for a distance of 63 miles to the sloping plain of Zoulla, along the bed of a river which, during the rainy season, was swollen to a powerful body of water.

In the summer season, however, it was dry, and at the time the pioneers passed through, its whole course was choked with great boulders and *débris* from the hills. For the passage of the troops the most unobstructed portions of the ravine had been selected to form a waggon road, but in some places—as the Sooroo, the narrowest part of the Pass—a road had to be cut through solid granite. To the Engineers, who had charge of this severe work, great praise is due. The soldiers marched, and baggage, animals, artillery, and waggons passed over with the greatest facility to the heights of Senafe.

In about two months everything was ready for an onward movement, and Sir Robert Napier arrived. After reviewing all that had been done—the erection of warehouses, bunders, pier-heads, condensers, and the railway—he passed on to Senafe to enjoy the cool mountain breezes.

A short railway had been laid from Zoulla to the extreme end of the camp, a distance of five miles. Two locomotives had been landed, and these proved very serviceable in removing the vast and rapid accumulation of stores to more convenient sites and different commissariat sheds along the line.

The next morning after my arrival in Abyssinia, before anyone was stirring in camp, my servant Ali and myself left Zoulla in excellent condition for rapid marching, but scantily furnished for a long campaign.

My ideas concerning Abyssinia and the English manner of conducting a campaign were yet crude, as will no doubt be perceived as I proceed.

From Zoulla to Koomaylee was a distance of fourteen miles. The route, after passing the camp at Zoulla, lay over a desert of sand, dotted at intervals with clumps of baubool shrubs, furze, and juniper bushes.

After passing the native village of Zoulla, we began to ascend wild and uncultivated eminences, overgrown with low shrubs, and broken here and there into deep furrows by the torrents which plough their resistless way during the rainy seasons. Now and then we crossed the dry bed of one of these springtime springs, choked up with round stones, and then were compelled to ascend a steep hill, and shortly cross another deep gully channelled in the soil. Not a drop of water could be found anywhere, and we learned at Koomaylee that no water fit to drink was found on any part of the beach ; that Colonel Merewether had been misled when he reported that water was plentiful, from the fact that the rainy season had but just closed before he arrived there.

He had found standing pools in certain places, but those in a few days had disappeared entirely, owing to the sandy nature of the soil, which had soon absorbed the water.

After about five hours' toilsome march we arrived at the base of the mountains, and mounting the summit of a small plateau, the camp on Koomaylee became visible. Here was the entrance to the Great Pass which cleft the mountain in two, and admitted the invaders into Abyssinia.

A wide, yawning gap was visible, flanked on each side by rising ranges whose precipitous sides were clothed in tangled brushwood and kolquall trees. Grey, weather-beaten rocks jutted here and there out of the mass of dark verdure, with lichens and mosses clustering about their sides. Above the nearest range of mountains rose others, till the summits of the farthest seemed to kiss the very clouds, and these appeared to enwrap and fold those within into a vast amphitheatre, through the centre of which the Pass ran its black and gloomy way. Had this deep gorge not been thus temporarily inhabited, a more mysterious-looking spot could scarcely be found.

The site of the camp was three-fourths of a circle. Two great hills at either end stood like Titan warders to guard the entrance. These two great hills were connected by narrow ridges with the lofty heights beyond.

Before going within the amphitheatre thus formed, we turned round to bid our adieus to the sea and view the prospect. At our feet expanded a plain covered over with baubool bushes and other shrubs, which hid the sand from view. Beyond the dark green an expanse of white, glistening, burning sand ; beyond this

again were the tents of the camp, looking like snow-heaps scattered far around ; farther off a noble fleet of ships riding at anchor in the bay, each shroud and rope seen distinctly, so clear was the air ; bounding their domain and sleeping under the noonday sun, was the island of Dissee. From our elevated position, the eye skimmed across the island and traced the blue and placid surface of the Red Sea, to the distant horizon. Twenty miles or so to our left, the flat-roofed buildings of the Arabic town of Massowah rose to view, nestling in groves of green trees.

Norton's American pumps had worked wonders in the camp at Koomaylee. Water spurted up in fine style. The sickly camels and mules enjoyed the precious beverage, and under the influence of the cool shadows flung over the camp by the stupendous heights above, and the soft and pure airs which blew down the Pass from the Highlands, they improved in a very short time. The sick soldiers in the hospitals soon recovered from the languor and general debility caused by a few weeks' stay at Zoulla.

The natives, who were of the Shoho tribe, flocked around the camp with their goats, their sheep and cattle giving a truly pastoral appearance to the scene. The goats climbed the grey rocks on the heights above, overhung with tufted trees, nibbled the creepers and clusters of shrubs growing under their umbrage ; the sheep bleated in melancholy tones below ; the cattle lowed, and the swart and naked Shoho children shouted lustily or played upon their reed pipes.

Bazaars had already assumed vast proportions on the ground that but a few short weeks since was the home of howling beasts of prey. The booths—made of straw mats—were laid out in two parallel lines to form an open street, and, but for the flimsy material of the dwellings, it would well have borne comparison with a street in Pekin. Looking up the bazaar, we commanded a view of the multitude of commodities with which it was supplied. Nets of onions, tobacco in leaf, and brown heaps of the fragrant weed grown in Latakiah and imported from far Stamboul were temptingly arrayed on wooden trays, in vari-coloured paper ; figs strung together on rushes, and figs in round cases ; pipes with amber mouthpieces, pipe-bowls with quaintest figures engraved on them ; common English clay pipes, narghilehs from Grand Cairo, and hubble-bubbles from Persia and Delhi ; jars full of black olives ; pocket glasses, in red pasteboard cases ; pickles, gherkins, sweets, jellies, cognac, claret, soda water, and innumerable other things from Paris and London.

Those things not to be found here were of no use to soldiers on a campaign.

There were no books, no lamps, no newspapers, no post-office—people never perceived the want of them—while dates, figs, nuts, raisins, and all sorts of liquors proved to be very saleable articles, and there was an abundance of these things. The bazaar was often frequented by the Shohoes and camp followers. Here the dark maidens of that country came unadorned and unclothed; here the wild children romped childishly gleeful in complete nudity; here the camp followers, men from Berbera, Donakil, Aden, from up the Persian Gulf and the jungles of India, dispensed with superfluous clothes, and sought the shelter of their open booths to loll in undisturbed freedom.

As I intended to make forced marches to overhaul the advance force, then at a station called Attigratt, I made out an indent on the Commissariat Department, and sent my boy Ali to draw the rations it called for.

It must not be thought for one moment that we received what was demanded by the indent; the thieving Parsees who had charge of the distribution of rations managed to retain very often one-half of what was our due. Very often, also, as we advanced into the interior, we were deprived of rice, ghee, sugar, tea, coffee, rum, potatoes, and vegetables, and at one time we were two months without either of the above-named rations.

When Ali returned from the Commissariat it was nearly sunset, and instead of the light-hearted boy that he usually was, he appeared much depressed and very sorrowful. On asking the cause of his gloomy looks he answered in his broken English:

‘Arab man tell me in bazaar Ingliliz man kill me in Habesh land, me want paper, me go back to Suez.’ And here he broke down and cried.

It seems that an Arab, restless and uneasy under the strict discipline of the English camp, had been telling him how English officers were so cruel that they generally flogged their unfortunate servants to death, and Ali’s fears were so excited at the idea of leaving his bones in Habesh land—an Arabic name for Abyssinia—that he had determined to apply to me for permission to return to Suez, where I had picked him up. I managed to soothe and calm his fears for the time.

On leaving Zoulla, I had not burdened myself with a tent, satisfied that I could purchase one whenever I wished it, and deemed one really necessary. I was partly right and partly wrong. Had I procured my horses, and mules, and tents at Zoulla, I should have been more independent, but the rumour

of the dash to be made upon Magdala had completely upset my better judgment, and caused me to wish to hurry on. But as the weather was mild, and I possessed a treasure of a buffalo robe to protect me from the dews, so long as I was marching I felt no inconvenience—I rather liked it than otherwise.

At early dawn we were in the saddle, and plunged into the yawning Pass. We left the camp, with its confused murmur breaking the stillness of the morning, far behind. We were led around abutments of rock, through jungles of mimosa, laurel bushes, and patriarchal sycamores, whose branches seemed alive with birds. Round acute angles formed by forward hills, up along the base of precipices of sheer rock, and then through paths cut through dense jungle, we followed the new road.

Soon the summits and slopes of the hills flanking our defile underwent a magical change. From a dull grey they had assumed an orange hue, which, rapidly discolouring, became silver. Gradually the silvery tints overspread the western slopes, and stole up the eastern side. Above, in the very centre of the heavens, the sun—a ball of liquid fire—was set, pouring his fiery rays remorselessly on our heads, denoting midday. At the same time we knew by the noise of voices that the next station, Sooroo, was near, and as we turned sharply to the right, round an abutment of earth and rock, the tents of the garrison appeared in view.

Dismounting from my horse, I sought out a shadowy spot, under a mulberry tree, and spreading a carpet there, lay down to rest. The two hours' siesta over, we pushed on again to the next station, Undel-Wells.

For three miles each side of the Sooroo, the most difficult and dangerous positions of the Pass were seen. For six miles the traveller passes through a very narrow defile, flanked by walls of sheer granite soaring up to a height of 800 feet on each side. Between these lofty walls of stone we crawled on, not certain but that a rock might become displaced, or a tree branch might be swept down into the yawning chasm. The least murmur of the human voice sounded in this awful depth like thunder, and the tread of the horses' feet like artillery rumbling over a bridge. For a height of ten feet above us were to be seen traces of the water which surged down the pass during the rainy season. In width the pass was not more than twenty-five feet, and its narrowest part was barely fifteen. With all the thousands of ravines, and gullies, and fissures emptying into the Sooroo defile, for a distance of fifty miles, some idea of the vast body of water rushing through the pass in the rainy season may be imagined.

Out of the gloomy depths of the Sooroo we emerged at last

into a more extended and much wider defile. Instead of the perpendicular walls of stone, lately passed, a hundred fantastic-shaped hills presented themselves, with their gently sloping sides covered by woody kolquall, groves of firs and pine, with low brushwood, juniper and furze. Then we travelled between ridges of stupendous mountains, with their crowns cut into shattered pinnacles, until we came to masses of ribbed rock and earth lying diagonally along the bottom of the defile. Now and then the eye was attracted by the quartz crystals, and then again the vision wandered to the splintered peaks and sharp and ragged outlines which the mountain tops presented against the pure blue sky.

At sunset, away at the farthest extremity of an avenue of firs, appeared the welcome fires of the camp of Undel-Wells, the termination of our double march on that day.

Another long day's march through scenes like those already described brought us to the base of a stupendous mountain up which the military road wound itself until it reached a gradually sloping ridge. Along this ridge we continued for half a mile, when, forcing our way up another steep hill, we arrived at last on the table-lands of Abyssinia, the altitude of which is fully 8,000 feet above the level of the sea.

The plateau was slightly rolling, and dotted with isolated cliffs of bizarre aspect, honeycombed with caves ; and dismal-looking holes, split into fissures, seemingly by volcanic action, were things seen at the first glance.

At the base of the very highest, a mass of grey rock, upright and frowning, was Senafe—just a mile from the edge of the Highlands—the first village of any importance we had seen in Abyssinia.

Directly in front of the village, a few hundred yards off, under the shadow of the tall grey rocks, and covering a gentler eminence, was the camp of the advance force. Behind the eminence, and protected by a battery of field-pieces, mounted so as to command all approach, were the commissariat and the mule lines. Here and there on grassy knolls, some gentleman idler or privileged officer had planted his tent, so as to have the full benefit of the bracing airs.

At respectable distances from the white tents were flocks of goats and broad-tailed sheep, attended by urchins clad in dressed goat-skin, who from afar surveyed with silent wonder the red coats, bright steel muskets, and the prancing horses of the British soldiery.

As I had heard it said that it was extremely cold at night at Senafe, I determined to apply for a tent at once ; and full of that

prudent resolution, I directed my steps to the Commanding Officer's sumptuous marquee, which stood in the centre of the camp. The Commanding Officer was General M——, with whom I had an interview, of which it will be sufficient to say that I left him with 'Good evening,' and an assurance that if ever I visited his tent again it would be because he had sent for me.

From General M——'s tent I rode away, when I was accosted by a smartly dressed officer, who asked me if I was in search of anyone.

'Oh, no ; no one in particular,' said I, with a laugh ; 'I am simply looking up a hostelry, where I can stay during the night.'

'Hostelries, my dear sir, are not very plentiful around Senafe, but there are several good-natured fellows who would be glad to take you in.'

'Oh, I believe you, sir, most certainly I do ; but, could you name anyone in particular ?'

'Why, yes ; there is Captain "Smelfungus." He has a big tent, and is——'

'What !' said I, 'is the famous Captain Smelfungus here ? I have heard of that gentleman everywhere. First at Alexandria, then at Suez, Zoulla, Koomaylee, and now he turns up at Senafe. Can you direct me to his tent ? He is such a remarkable character that I must make his acquaintance while there is a chance.'

'Oh, yes ; you see ~~that~~ tent on that little knoll all alone ? You will find the Captain there. As I see you are in a hurry, I will wish you good evening.'

'Good evening, and many thanks to you,' I responded heartily ; and then putting spurs to my horse, I soon found myself before the Captain's tent.

Coming down the slope from camp was a short, bushy-whiskered man, dressed in a brown suit, with a gun stuck in a saddle-bag, swinging a couple of ibis he had shot, from which it was evident he had been out on a sporting excursion. Dismounting, and delivering his horse and the ibis into the charge of a couple of servants, who stepped officiously forward to aid him, and turning round, he for the first time saw a stranger in me, and stepping up with the blindest of smiles and gracefulest of apologies, the remarkable man demanded of me if he could in any way be of service to me.

'I came here to seek Captain Smelfungus, sir,' said I ; 'I presume you are the gentleman.'

He allowed his face to expand into another exceedingly bland smile, and said, 'Yes, sir ; I am the gentleman.'

I informed him that I had heard so much of his talents and

his glorious achievements, that I could not retire to rest without first paying my respects to him.

'Ah, sir,' said he in feeling accents, 'you do me too much honour; but may I ask to whom I have the pleasure of speaking?'

I gave him freely the pleasure he sought. At the declaration of my being an American he pricked his ears, rolled his eyes, and almost ruined his poor whiskers; but when I modestly hinted that I was a newspaper correspondent, he declared that I was a fellow-countryman—that I was his brother, not only by nationality, but by profession. His tent was mine, he affirmed, his servants were mine also, his cooking utensils were mine, and his rations were mine. What more could a gentleman of the Press wish? Here was a home, here were servants, plenty of cooking utensils, an abundance of rations, and an estimable countryman and brother.

'But come in, my friend; enter my canvas domicile. Why stand we out in the twilight, when a supper meet for the gods is spread ready for the guest?' After delivering his magniloquent but hospitable address, my new-found friend and myself entered the tent, where, in truth, a most savoury meal was laid out. At the same time my precious Ali arrived with his two animals, and these were immediately relieved of their burdens, and also fed out of the Captain's abundance.

Feeling necessitated to say something, I said blandly—

'Pardon me, Captain; but you hinted something to me about your being connected with the Press, if I mistake not.'

In what way the great Captain Smelfungus made out his claim to be regarded as a very important and protean member of the Press; or what high commission from the British authorities he was charged with, I am not at liberty to divulge. I became from that time the messmate of Smelfungus, the recipient of all his old stories of life in India, and of service in the Confederate army; and much could I tell of his eccentricities and little failings, but the sacred claims of hospitality condemn me to be silent. It is enough to say that I never was more instructed, amused, or astonished than I was that first evening at Senafe. It was at a late hour of the night when we both rolled ourselves in our rugs and finally dropped asleep.

The sun was high in the heavens when I awoke next morning. The gallant Captain was in his brown suit, on bended knees, above a lengthy despatch box marked 'Sir X. Y.,' filled with the knick-knacks that so distinguished a gentleman should be supposed to possess. Now he tenderly handled 'stars,' 'orders,' in silver

and gold ; then a curious dirk which he exhibited to me as a present from the Maharajah of Putiala ; then a scimitar given to him, so he said, by the Nizam of Hyderabad ; a fancy Malacca cane from the Guicowar of Baroda ; an amber necklace from the Begum of Bhopaul ; a sword presented to him by the Duke of Cambridge ; then a pair of wide-mouthed duelling pistols, presented to him by General Benedek, two days after the battle of Königgrätz ; a silver-mounted Colt's revolver, a parting gift from General Robert E. Lee, and hosts of other things too numerous to mention.

'Is Sir X. Y. a relative of yours ?' I asked him, after again glancing at the box.

'Yes, he was a first cousin of mine. He lately died, and left me a handsome estate worth 7,000*l.* a year, situated in Dorsetshire.'

'Oh, indeed ! A very handsome property that, and no mistake ; but gentlemen well-connected like you, Captain, always drop into something handsome.'

'Yes, that's so,' said he, and then in a careless tone added, 'but I have half a dozen very pretty little estates like that, in different parts of the United Kingdom.' . . .

I asked him when he intended to leave for the front.

'To-night, by all means,' said he.

'Then that arrangement will suit me perfectly, for I am in first-rate trim for rapid marching.'

'I see you are,' said he with a smile ; 'but I have quite a host of things, and I doubt very much whether my five animals will carry what I have ; but it is an axiom with travellers, that what they cannot take with them they can always leave behind.'

Captain Smelfungus was indeed well provided with every requisite of camp equipage. He possessed a large American wall-tent, and a small *tente-abri*, any number of camp kettles, and dishes, besides being well supplied with provisions, curry powder pickles, cracknel biscuits, brandies, a keg of patent punch, and, to cap all, five servants to wait on him.

Throughout the day the Captain seemed busy with his baggage, attending to his horses, packing one thing carefully away, destroying another as superfluous, and so long as he was in this state of incertitude so long would the falcon-eyed Abyssinian urchins stay in the vicinity to eye his preparations for departure, ready to swoop upon the trash which is invariably left when a person breaks camp.

It wanted half an hour of sunset before our little caravan was fairly on the way.

CHAPTER III

AN ADVENTUROUS JOURNEY BY NIGHT—AN ABYSSINIAN AREOPAGUS—
NATIVE ORATORY

THERE is nothing to interest a man on a night travel. On this our first journey in Abyssinia Proper, and by night too, our thoughts and fancies were anything but agreeable. It was scarcely dark, and we had not been on the road an hour, before we perceived ourselves followed by troops of animals, bounding upright, giving vent to angry snarls, and swiftly flitting past. Shortly, a chorus of unearthly yells broke the solemn stillness of the night, which was caught up and echoed eagerly all around us. Another deep silence prevailed, to be in a short time, however, broken by a savage roar, uttered evidently in our immediate neighbourhood. It gave our party an involuntary start. I had heard frequently the lion, the tiger, and the panther; but I was positive that this one we heard was neither, and, thinking so great a traveller as the Captain should know, I propounded the question to him. The Captain, I remarked, had been riding ahead previous to the sharp cries that preceded the roar, like a man bound to clear the way for the troop behind, couching a large boar-spear in true knightly style; but he had gradually slackened his pace afterwards, until he was riding alongside with me.

‘What animal is that, Captain?’ As I asked the question my own fugitive presence of mind returned instantly, as if I felt emboldened by my own voice.

‘It’s a hyæna,’ answered that gentleman.

‘Is it a dangerous animal?’

‘Very,’ was his reply.

‘Will it attack us?’

‘No, unless we attack it.’

‘But suppose you try his mettle with your spear?’

‘No, thank you,’ replied he loftily; ‘he is not worthy of my steel. I mean to reserve this spear for gorillas and wild boars, or lions and hippopotami.’

I urged him no further; and feeling, I suppose, that his presence gave me courage, he never quitted my side until we reached Goom-Gooma four hours after.

The hyenas’ and jackals’ cries sounded close to us the whole night, and it was evident that they followed us, or that they were in plentiful numbers around us.

Around the camp at Goom-Gooma resounded their hideous cries ; and, as we were new and strange to the country as yet, the Captain exhibited a tender thoughtfulness for our safety by having our tent pitched in the centre of the camp, where we felt perfectly safe from any attack of wild beasts.

Before we retired, however, we crowded around a blazing camp fire, for the nights were very cold on the table-land of Abyssinia, and, attracted by the friendly blaze, several of the garrison came also to see and greet the new arrivals. The Captain attracted the most attention by his brown garb, his cool off-handedness and his military title, with which everybody was made acquainted before we had been five minutes in camp.

The camp at Goom-Gooma was situated in one of the most lovable, delightful little vales that could possibly be found. So enthusiastic was one young Scotchman upon its beauties, that he said it eclipsed Scotland's fairest dell in its pastoral and quiet loveliness.

Above, on a rocky platform, halfway up the cliffs that nearly surrounded the valley, was the Shoho village, whence the name Goom-Gooma was derived.

We climbed, and enter for the first time an Abyssinian village. A huddle of low, flat-roofed, mud houses, populous with queer inhabitants dressed in queer style. Every available patch of shadow exhibits a cluster of greasy swart heads of male and female children. The youngest people were all naked ; the oldest people scantily clad. They looked at me with all their might as soon as I stood in their village square. In the centre of the square was a *Bema*, where the patriarch sat, surrounded by the other dignitaries—the sub-patriarch, or the next oldest ; the lawyer or orator sat on his right ; and the man that was talking was the lawyer, near whom sat a young man, whom I judged to be the plaintiff. It was a court, and a trial was being held. Though I was a stranger, the elders, and lawyers, and court were too much engrossed in their own business to look at me long ; but the little ones formed themselves into a circle around me, and kept their innocent jet-black eyes fixed upon me. My cigar attracted particular attention ; the slightest roll of my eyes, or a wink, had a certain charm for these aborigines. A cough set them all pondering earnestly, and the sound of my voice was an unaccountable phenomenon. Then the colour of my face was a thing they endeavoured to analyse. The formation of my hands caused them to meditate upon the principles of comparative anatomy.

From the Abyssinian court I proceeded, followed by the whole

village, to examine more closely the material of their huts. They were built of reddish mud, detached from each other ; the walls were from six to ten feet high, roofed over with poles on which bamboos were laid ; then a layer of straw, over which earth was laid to the depth of half a foot or more.

Occupying the scant shade afforded by the projections of the houses were the wizened old grandmothers, wearily crooning some ditty that had just crossed their memories ; while in the low doorways might be seen the very oldest great-grandfathers, centenarians, profoundly meditative.

From other parts of the village, where the cry 'Hail ! the conqueror cometh !' had already preceded us, came scores of women and children, and, as I turned my eyes around, I perceived that the tattooed and swarthy matrons had also squatted themselves around us. Encouraged by the presence of their mothers, fifties of round-eyed little urchins rollicked and tumbled in the dust, and piled it into tiny castles and pyramids, like our own more elegant children do at our watering-places with the sand on the sea-shore. After viewing all that was worth seeing I descended the hill, and found the Captain ready for another day's march.

CHAPTER IV

A SANDSTONE PLATEAU—STRANGE FREAKS OF NATURE—EXPLOITS OF SMELFUNGUS AT FOCADA—AN ABYSSINIAN CHURCH AND A FUNERAL

WHEN I overtook the Captain and our little caravan, I found him in an extremely bad temper with a servant named Hassan, who seemed indisposed to proceed farther.

The black-looking country wore, in truth, a very portentous aspect. It was destitute of all vegetation, save a few dried shrubs. We rode over a solid sheet of sandstone miles in extent. To our left was a labyrinthine ravine, a crooked gully channelled in the rock, which ran along for many a mile ; and on our right, forty miles off, rose the Adowa peaks, dark and undefined.

Four hours' travelling brought us to the base of a hill which rose high and grim, like another Gibraltar, above the sterile plateau we had just crossed. On all sides it was rendered easily defensible, on account of its scarped cliffs, the lowest point of which was about three hundred feet above the level ground.

Excepting a conical peak a thousand yards' distance to the

south of it, there was no spot that commanded it, and from its vast size I judged it was capable of accommodating a garrison of 10,000 men.

On the south-eastern extremity, a ridge of rock a mile and a half in length connected this fortress-like hill with a range of rolling mounds covered with short firs and juniper. On either side of the neck, which at its widest part was not a mile wide, were ravines of the perpendicular depth of 600 feet, gradually expanding into broad valleys, rich in meadow lands and groves, and watered by running streams. Game of all kinds was found in these valleys. Overlooking the village and church of Focada were the tents of a company of cavalry, the garrison of the place. Water had been obtained by sinking several wells, which supplied a sufficient quantity to fill an extensive reservoir, whereat the animals were watered.

We arrived at Focada camp two hours before sunset, where we speedily forgot our toils in copious draughts of the finest Bohea, and savoury curry and fricandeaus cooked by my epicurean friend the Captain.

Focada was so very pleasant and interesting that the Captain and I, after protracted consultations, agreed to stay there two or three days, as no movement of the advance was expected for a week longer.

The first day was occupied by my distinguished friend in overhauling his miscellaneous baggage, which was in a sad pickle after the march from Goom-Gooma. Several bottles of chutney and curry powder were found to have been broken by the jostling they had received, and the volleys of abuse which fulminated about the ears of his unlucky servants made them mute with terror.

Fortunately my remarkable friend who was my messmate was an ardent admirer of the chase, and a great part of the time we halted at Focada he spent in hunting. At night he would return, and the feats of hunting he performed would have filled a newspaper column. The first day he shot two panthers, eleven species of the gigantic toucan, seven dozen pigeons, one hyæna, one jackal, and one hare, out of which he brought home one scraggy-looking hare, three shattered pigeons, and one immense bird which he called the gigantic toucan. The last-mentioned bird measured five feet from the tip of the posterior feathers to the beak's point. On questioning Ali, who had accompanied him, the boy said he didn't see the Captain shoot any more than he brought; which probably was owing to Ali's defective vision.

On the second morning of our stay at Focada we heard a

great noise, which seemed to issue from the village whence the name of the camp was derived. The village was situated on a hill a little to our left, commanding the neck of ground on which our camp was situated. At its base was a church—the first Abyssinian church to be seen on the road from Senafe to Antalo. This church, surrounded on all sides by trees, stood almost on the brink of a deep gulf or chasm, which, starting from a point a few yards beyond the church, gradually widened into a broad and extensive valley. Between the village and the church lay the little graveyard of the natives who dwelt there.

Our tent was pitched halfway between the village and the camp of the garrison, so that we could have a good view of the camp and village. The noise and shouting drew near, and we observed the head of a column of people of both sexes coming down the hill at a slow pace; every now and then halting to rest, giving utterance to some most ear-piercing shrieks and doleful howls. After inquiring as to its cause, and ascertaining that it was a funeral procession, I went up to get a view of the ceremony.

There were about a hundred and fifty people, old and young, in the procession, preceded by a few priests. These ministers of the Abyssinian Church, clad in the usual apparel of a well-to-do Abyssinian—viz. a cotton robe, with a broad scarlet band running along its entire length—were conducting themselves in a frantic manner. They tore off their turbans, pulled at their hair, and then, folding their hands across their bosoms, looked inexpressibly miserable. Well-thumbed parchment books, written in the Arabic tongue, and illuminated with all sorts of grotesque figures and devices, were in their hands, out of which they now and then selected a long prayer to some of their favourite saints, and chanted it with strong lungs, with a nasal twang, in the most lugubrious manner. This ceremony went on for the space of a few minutes, when they again started on their march, the priests bending their bodies. At every few paces they performed various genuflections, and lifted up their voices in howls, expressive of extreme agony.

When they drew near the grave, the grey-headed elders who were carrying the corpse, carefully folded in its cerements made of the cotton cloth which it wore during life, advanced to the edge of the excavation, and lowered the body slowly into it; then the priests chanted a prayer.

The grave was closed, an oblong mound of earth was raised over it faced round with rocks, and a long slab of slate stone placed at each end. The company then scattered, the major part

following in the wake of a man who discoursed merry tunes on the oboe or hautbois. From the grave I strolled to the church just mentioned. One of the priests, who had been chanting lustily and laboriously at the late funeral, promptly offered to be my escort and cicerone through the building for a slight consideration.

The consideration had to be paid first, in the shape of a new Maria Theresa dollar, which is worth eight cents more than the American dollar.

A tower-shaped construction, overarched by the branches of two fine sycamore trees, admitted us into the building, set apart for the solemnisation of Christian rites and ceremonies.

Of a certainty nothing in the shape of a church, from a cathedral down to a backwoods meeting-house, found in any other quarter of the globe, save Africa, could have presented such a scene of filth and slovenliness as the building dedicated to Holy St. Michael, at Focada. At only a single step from the door, within the structure, one realised the unutterable forlornness and abjectness of the place.

On the third morning of our arrival at Focada we packed up and started for Attigratt, the next station, which was said to be ten miles off.

The labours of the pioneers on this road were to some purpose. Every mile of it was across an almost solid bed of rock, whose jagged points shot upward in every direction. The levers and blasting tools were very necessary here, and much skill and tact were requisite to convert the most easily convertible portion of the rocky plateau into a road. It then ran through forests of scrub oak, tamarisk, and kolquall. When it was completed, it presented a very fair specimen of military engineering. It was fifteen feet in width, and made as smooth as the circumstances of its surroundings would permit. Marching columns with their baggage could move easily along, and even the carts of the lowland train could travel from the sea-coast to Attigratt.

A mile or so beyond this village we came to a plain, or a valley rather, to which we descended by a gentle declivity. We observed the first green corn visible on our march. There was an extensive patch there well watered by a system which answered its purpose very well, the furrows being fed by a small stream.

In the midst of this smiling scene a cluster of low-roofed houses was visible, whither I directed my steps. Larks sang merrily above ; the corn was all in a ripple and flow before the western wind, and the tremulous heat danced upon it, as upon a sea.

At my approach, nut-brown girls with cunning chignons at the back of their heads crowded up to meet us, with as much noise and vivacity as a bevy of school-girls returning home from school. Naked urchins came wriggling and wheeling, delighted, no doubt, at the opportunity of exhibiting their gymnastic powers before discerning persons. I requested some 'haleeb,' or milk, for which, I said, I would be willing to pay the usual tribute—a bright new 'gourshi,' or dollar.

A young girl, graceful as a Hebe, bore the 'haleeb' to me, and out of it I drank a deep draught with much relish.

We came in sight of Attigratt, the head-quarters of Sir Robert Napier, about noon.

The distance that we had marched was so short that we made up our minds to travel another march before halting, and endeavour to catch up with the pioneer party under Colonel Phayre. The Captain had shot two dozen pigeons on the road, to present to Sir Robert Napier. As he departed to the camp, I struck off to the right to view the village of Attigratt.

Attigratt is situated on a gentle eminence in the middle of a plain. The feature of the place is a castle built of adobes. At one end of it is a square tower, surmounted by four turret-like projections built on projecting rafters. To civilised eyes it seemed more like a caricature than a house for defence and built for strength.

At the time we passed by this castle, it was inhabited by the wife of a chief who was in the power of Theodore. This lady considered herself inconsolable because her princely husband was absent, and had vowed the foolish vow that she would never allow the sun to shine or the rain to beat upon her head again until her lord should return to cheer her heart.¹

Near the stronghold was a church—undoubtedly the finest I have seen in Abyssinia, save one at Chelicut. It was surrounded by magnificent euphorbia trees, whose shade was truly grateful. The priests—very respectable old fellows, with turbans, larger than ordinary, rising high and steep above the face—came and greeted me with many a salutation and salaam.

My desire to visit their church was intimated to them with the usual backsheesh, and a pantomimic explanation of the reason of my gift. This pantomime one learns very easily, and is a great aid to acquaintance, making, when thorough in it, the luxuries of

¹ For the satisfaction of readers, I will state that the chief was delivered from bondage at the capture of Magdala. The author arrived at Attigratt the same day that the chief came in sight of his castle walls.

the country—such as milk, eggs, ghee, bread, and oats—flow in upon you so long as your treasury permits.

The priests understood the use of the gift, and I followed them as they proceeded through the grove in the direction of the portals, then wide open. Through a clean courtyard, and then to a square entrance leading to the interior, the priests shuffled themselves along, as if walking were an exercise not much in their province.

After passing through the entrance or porch of the building, we descended one step into a lobby or hall running around the entire circumference of the church. The walls of this circular building were constructed of stone, plastered over with an inch of mud laid as evenly as possible.

On the altar were painted with queerest devices the Abyssinian cartoons. First, there was the picture of St. George for ever threatening the dragon writhing under his horse's feet, with an admiring group of noble ladies and gentlemen viewing, with keen satisfaction on their faces, the death-throes of the man-devouring enemy. The interesting crowd of ladies and gentlemen with their red, blue, and green garnitures, and enormous feathers, was supposed to represent Pharaoh and his court. The second cartoon illustrated in a remarkable way the 'Last Supper,' whereat thirteen apostles were supposed to be partaking of the feast. The third represented the crucifixion of poor St. Peter, whose agonies must have been intense, so faithfully had the native artist endeavoured to paint the contortions of the man undergoing such a cruel martyrdom. Others there were, who appeared to suffer torments. Before I could view with my sacrilegious eyes the *Sancta Sanctora* of the church, another dollar was demanded from me, the tribute was paid, and the priest led me into the Holy of Holies—the interior of the charmed circle, round which I had been promenading preceded by the cicerone.

There was nothing very edifying in the sight—a rough desk, with a large Maltese cross of brass fronting it, before which the priests offered their orisons when officiating on the Sabbath, kept every Saturday. There was also a big book very like a Bible, bound strongly in leather, and clasped, lying on a stand. The floor was not very clean; in some places it was so littered with straw, that I imagine some unholy vagrants must have laid down to sleep there.

From the church I stepped out into the open air, and from the eminence whereon the church and castle is built the entire plain of Attigratt was visible. In the centre of it, like snow-heaps, stood the cleanly white tents of the English army.

Now and then a stray laugh could be heard, very English-like, hearty and sonorous. Guards and sentries in scarlet uniform, with gleaming steel in their hands, paced backwards and forwards near some official head-quarters, or with watchful eye guarded the Commissariat containing the real sinew of the campaign. Officers in splendid uniforms, with rattling sabres and jingling spurs, hurried to and fro on horseback, conveying orders to different regimental head-quarters; horses and mules, tethered in rows by hundreds neighed and brayed hungrily for their scanty rations—for it was now noonday, the period when they are all fed and watered. Scores of curious natives stood in groups round some sight extraordinary for them, and I dare say were commenting wisely on the queer things they saw.

A few miles beyond this exciting and strange scene on an Abyssinian plain, the bold mountains, curved into bays and headlands, loomed up like a coast of cloudland veiled in amethyst light. Beyond this, again, in tier upon tier rose the dim mountains, serving as a barrier between the Abyssinians and the cruel tribes of the Donakil plains.

After gazing on this scene I bethought myself of my servants, uncaring and uncared for; and, though I wished to make myself known to Sir Robert Napier, I thought it better, as the Advance Brigade would march upon the morrow, to proceed on my way and endeavour to keep ahead of them and close up with the pioneer force, who were then far in advance making the roads. So I galloped on, my horse's heels kicking up a cloud of dust, to the intense delight of the urchins who rushed forward before him as he approached them, with much of the same defiance and daring on their features as our more civilised children at home exhibit when with mad audacity they await the approach of the thundering locomotive, and then bound off, barely escaping being crushed to death.

My visits to the grotesque castle and church of Attigratt had consumed some time, and had enabled my servants to proceed several miles before I caught up with them.

From Attigratt the road led through a grove of fir and juniper, and clumps of the kolquall, very picturesque to look at, but suggestive of suitable places for ambuscade by the robber bands of which we had heard often from the timid natives, who mysteriously hinted of Gallas waiting in secret places for the unwary.

No such bands, however, did we encounter on our march that day, and we arrived at a leafy grove situated chiefly under the shadow of massive rocks, over which our route lay the next day.

In the centre of this grove we pitched our little tent, and against a fallen sycamore log built our camp fire. The cooks prepared their pots and pans and dishes. Ali took the leathern bottles to a spring of clear fresh water. The syce, though tired and sulky after his long, weary march over the rough rocks, vented his ill humour by volleys of adjectives freely bestowed upon the horses and himself, but finally led the animals to the water ; and I, part lord and master of the encampment, revelled on the warm blankets and buffalo robes, and waited patiently for the arrival of the Captain, who had already arrogated to himself the chief control of our caravan.

In the midst of these intensely interesting meditations, the Captain's broad form suddenly broke the perspective of my vision, radiant with unusual good humour.

'By the bye,' said he abruptly, 'what have you for dinner ? Let's have a roaring dinner fit for the Immortals ; I will be cook, and you be bottle-washer. What shall we have, eh ?' And, raising his fingers, he proceeded to enumerate delectable dishes, which were to be made from the contents of his box of stores.

'First of all we'll have mulligatawny soup ; and for *entrées*, we'll have—let me see : a buffalo hump chop ; roast hind-quarter of a kid, supplied by the Commissariat to-day out of pure regard for me ; roast duck—one I saved from a lot I shot to-day. Oh, yes ; and then there are the ibis. By Jove ! we'll have hashed ibis, boiled Commissariat beef, rice, onion sauce, and curry, all of them to be finished up with real Mocha coffee ; and before tumbling in for the night we'll have a drink together from my visitor's flask, eh ? What say you, old boy ?'

'Glorious !' said I ; 'and, to use the words of the Bard of Avon, may good digestion wait on appetite, and health on both !'

'Bravo ! ah-haw ! ah-haw !' shouted the old boy, rubbing his head, and pulling his side whiskers, and kicking his legs frantically, through an enthusiastic impulse.

Mohammed, Hassan, Habibullah, and Ali were at once set to work. The fire roared and crackled, and the servants flitted backwards and forwards ; and as day settled gradually and kindly into night, and the towering cliffs and lonely plain expanding from view, teeming with green groves, became bathed in the glow of the declining sun, supper, or rather dinner, was announced.

Every dish was delicious. We both had good appetites and healthful digestion, and we lingered over the feast till far into the night—the Captain recounting marvellous adventures, hair-

breadth escapes, love stories truly romantic, gallops over glorious plains by moonlight in India ; stories of his Nilotic experiences, wherein Fatima and Zuleika figured conspicuously ; Don Juan scrapes with Miss Something ; tales of forlorn hopes at Sebastopol ; of a white face resembling the Captain's lying for two weeks in the trenches at Inkermann ; of being resuscitated from that two weeks' death-like sleep, and a four months' lying in bed at Scutari Hospital ; of his gallant Arab 'Emir' of the matchless Nedjed breed ; of his exploits as *sabreur* on the Texan prairies against Federals and Comanches ; of bush-fights in miasmatic swamps, and many other interesting and marvellous novelties. Are they not all written in the books of the recording angel ? who, no doubt, is well acquainted with phonography ; otherwise, hard indeed must have been his task to write down all the interesting stories of my dear friend and messmate, Captain the Honourable Mr. Smelfungus.

From Attigratt to Mai-Wahiz is a distance of fourteen miles. On this stage we passed through an exceedingly wild country. For three hours our road lay over a vast platform of sandstone rock, and through its extreme ruggedness it proved very fatiguing to both men and animals. But halfway to Mai-Wahiz the scene changed. Another plain similar to that near Attigratt, of the same arid features, expanded before us, with its dead level only relieved by a few green clumps.

To this plain we descended, picking our way daintily to avoid unsettling the toppling boulders on the hill flank.

As we descended, the sandstone platform over which we had been travelling receded sharply to the right into lofty and scarped sierras, rifted and split into many a fissure. These rifts and abradations form excellent coverts, whence issue numerous carnivorous animals every evening on their nocturnal ranges in quest of food.

The poorest class of peasants, like the ancient Troglodytes, also find these cavernous recesses in the cliffs admirable habitations, and a protection against cruel chiefs and unjust masters. But, growing bold from impunity, and waxing stronger and insolent with numbers, the peasants generally select a chief from amongst themselves, and become the oppressors instead of the oppressed. After amassing wealth through the success of their depredations, they not unfrequently take to building a town upon the top of the most inaccessible hill, and fortify it with palisades and moats, whence they issue out periodically, and pounce upon a confiding farmer and take from him his wives, children, cattle, and substance.

This is the history of most of the towns in this neighbourhood, and, in fact, of those of the whole of Abyssinia. What the Abyssinians are to-day, not many centuries ago the warlike British barons were ; or the Highlanders who used to make many a wild foray upon the more peaceful burghers of the Lowlands ; or the robber counts of the Rhine.

I was led to make these reflections by seeing the numerous fortified towns, built like eyries on the numerous conical hills rising far above the level of the plain, in every direction. The warning voice of the watchful native warder bawled out in unmistakable accents of anger if we advanced near the base of the fortified cone with the intention of purchasing any necessaries, such as eggs, butter, milk, whey, or bread. Near each hill was a well belonging to the village on its summit, and these wells were the only places where water was procurable on the march. We generally camped near some pools of very dirty water—compelled to do so because there were no others ; and it was considered unsafe, until the army had passed through, to place much confidence in the Abyssinians.

Instead of stopping at Mai-Wahiz, as we had designed when we started in the morning, we pushed on to Ad-Abaga, where a plentiful supply of water was to be found.

Ad-Abaga is situated in a basin-like valley two miles in extent, surrounded by a range of heights, crowned by villages inhabited by very predatory and fighting-loving people ; who, strange to say, though all more or less related to one another, manage to live on wonderfully good terms with themselves, though not with the outside world.

We camped one night at this place, and pushed on to Dongola next morning, a station situated just twelve miles from Ad-Abaga. This march lay through a very interesting country. Much labour had been employed upon some portions of it to make it available for the coming army. For the first three miles we travelled through a very tame and uninteresting country, mere uphill and downhill work, with a village of conical huts standing on the summit of every eminence, proudly exclusive from the people of the plain.

Then we journeyed over a road cleared through a perfect jungle of low brushwood. Towering above the shrubs were tall juniper and fir trees, their branches darkly waving and crooning under the strong gusts of wind which at certain hours of the day blew from the Eastern seas across the Donakil desert ; then through a wilderness of boulders, some of gigantic size, some small, all lying around in the utmost confusion imaginable ; anon

through a dark g \ddot{o} rge where, on the summits of the flanking rocky walls, a small band might put to flight an army ; and again through a forest of shrubs and through long avenues of noble sycamore trees, in whose branches disported the monkeys, whence issued the notes of the butcher-bird, and whence the gay clock-bird flung his glad piping abroad.

Sadly at variance with these scenes were the buff-coloured masses of granite, gneiss, and the dark patches of slate-stone looming up grim and silent, whereon no bird hopped, whence no lively song of the feathered choristers issued.

Passing rapidly by these scenes and turning round an angle, the towering baobab was seen, whose branches were heavy with scores of Abyssinian monkeys, who, upon our approach, snarled their disapprobation, and irreverently retired up the slope of the nearest mountain, barking and growling discontentedly.

We passed the baobab trees also, and our path ran around the slopes of a high mountain. We hugged the slope and resolutely turned our gaze away, to admire rather the varieties of rock of which the mountain is composed ; to look at diagonal layers of porphyry, half-buried masses of scoria and soapstone ; to examine the clay, slate, and quartz running in serpentine veins far up out of sight ; to pick up cornelians and pieces of jasper stone ; and thus we travelled until the green valley of Dongola was visible, in the centre of which two or three tents were to be seen like lime-heaps in the midst of luxurious grass.

From Dongola, after one night's rest, we journeyed on to Agulla river, a distance of ten miles. Before the sun was fairly up we were on the road, having contented ourselves with a simple cup of tea before starting again up steep hills, rough with craggy obstructions. Over rolling plateaus, past smiling valleys, by robbers' roosts, and peasants' caves, we marched ever southward. The sun rose ; its rays pierced the seeming belt of mist ahead of us, mantling it in tints of exquisite loveliness, and flushing it with delicate hues.

When the mist disappeared, a line of dark hills clothed with euphorbia distinctly made themselves known to us by their height. We crossed the horizon that we saw an hour previous, only to see another range, grimmer in aspect, and inconceivably terrible to him who has not beheld Ethiopian mountains.

Patient and uncomplaining, the animals keep their regular walk, seemingly unmindful of the heat or the blows heavily bestowed upon them by our cutcha wallahs.

Smelfungus was ahead of the little column ; his wide-spreading solar topee shadowed his head and face, and nothing of either



CASTLE BETWEEN MAI-WAHIZ AND AD-ABAGA.

was visible ; nor could I guess whether he was sleeping or dreaming, or with eyes wide awake, diligently observant for a chance to do or say something to break the dead, unjoyous silence, while I brought up the rear.

My horse looked as dejected as I felt sure I must have looked. I had examined the blue sky, and even winked fiercely once or twice at the fierce sun, and scanned the horizon dozens of times ; I had looked in vain for something wrong in the harness of the mules ; I had watched carefully the conduct of the servants, to show who was master ; I had mentally sketched scores of caricatures on the broad back of the Captain, and imagined him sitting in his huge solar topee rowing on Lake Ashangi, for he had promised seriously to do it.

What could I do to relieve the distressing tedium of marching ? The question resolved itself.

With my eyes wide open in the broad hot sunlight, I fell to day-dreaming. A queer thought struck me, and I laughed ; at which Ali, my bold surrujee, turned on me a pair of large black eyes, surveying me in mute astonishment, as if asking 'What can you find to laugh at, master, in Habesh Land ?'

The Captain turned his bullet head around, and the green topee swung like a turn-table. He looked upon me with the greatest astonishment ; I blushed, looking, however, far away in advance of him. I shouted 'Camp ! Camp !' Wonderful resuscitation !

The mules brayed, our horses^o whinnied, the Captain trolled out a song, 'La-la-la-ety,' positively the first tune I ever heard him sing ! Our Arab surrujees and Hindostanee cutcha wallahs crooned forth most doleful notes out of four pairs of lips, expressive of great relief and heartfelt thankfulness, to be increased when we arrived at camp, which was on the banks of a river, the first river we had seen in Abyssinia, under the shade of a sycamore, near the ruins of a temple.

The ruins near to which we were encamped were those of a temple erected by King Lala-ba in the eleventh century to St. Dorcas, a Greek saint. This was one of several built by that pious monarch in different parts of the empire. It had been falling gradually to decay on account of the incursions made by the Mahomedan tribes into the province of Enderta, through a portion of which the river Agulla runs ; and, upon King Sabagadis' accession to the throne of Abyssinia, that monarch heard it rumoured that much treasure was buried in the place by his predecessor, and at once ordered search to be made. This search, of course, necessitated the demolition of the building. The treasure

was found, however, and the ancient fane remains in precisely the same condition as the workmen of the greedy king left it. Two pillars only are left standing now, but in some portions the marble pavement is still intact. The river, called solely by that name from courtesy, as rivers were so scarce in the country we were travelling, was a rapid little stream, only ankle deep in its deepest parts, and but a few yards in width, into which our animals and ourselves plunged, and where we revelled for half an hour or so.

At the camp of Agulla we found Colonel W. L. Merewether and Mr. Clements Markham, the distinguished geographer of the Expedition.

Colonel Merewether was a Colonel of the Scinde Horse, but acted as Political Resident at Aden before coming to Abyssinia. Rassam was a former secretary of his while at Aden, and it was through the influence of Layard of Nineveh that the Armenian gentleman was appointed as envoy to Theodore. That selection, in my opinion, was most unfortunate; but Merewether adhered to the belief that no better could have been found.

The Colonel was the very soul of politeness and affability; and it was delightful to hear him talk.

During the three days we rested at Agulla the Captain went shooting. At nightfall he generally returned with dozens of guinea-fowl, quail, ducks, ibis, wild geese, and turkeys. He said he had shot three wild boars, but I never saw one bristle of them.

On the fourth morning we struck our tent, packed our baggage, loaded our animals, and started on our journey to Antalo.

Very uninteresting was the march from Agulla river to Antalo. We arrived at Dorello, 19 miles distant from Agulla, on the evening of the first day; Haikhullut, 9 miles, the second day; thence to Antalo, 14 miles, on the third day.

CHAPTER V

NAPIER'S PROCLAMATION—DIPLOMACY—MAJOR GRANT—MEETING
BETWEEN NAPIER AND PRINCE KUSSAI—AFFECTING SCENES

WHILE the redoubtable Captain and myself were travelling to Antalo with what cheer we might, an interesting scene was being enacted a few marches back, in which an English general and an Abyssinian prince were the principal actors.



RUINS OF AN ANCIENT CHURCH AT AGULLA.—MR. STANLEY'S TENT.

His Excellency Lieut.-Gen. Sir Robert Napier, Commander-in-Chief of the Abyssinian Expedition, on landing in Abyssinia, issued the following proclamation to the governors, the chiefs, the religious orders, and the people of Abyssinia :

'It is known to you that Theodorus, King of Abyssinia, detains in captivity the British Consul, Cameron ; the British Envoy, Rassam ; and many others, in violation of the laws of all civilised nations. All friendly persuasion having failed to obtain their release, my Sovereign has commanded me to lead an army to liberate them. All who befriend the prisoners or assist in their liberation shall be well rewarded ; but those who may injure them shall be severely punished when the time shall arrive for the march of a British Army through your country. Bear in mind, people of Abyssinia, that the Queen of England has no unfriendly feelings towards you, and no design against your country or your liberty. Your religious establishments, your persons, and property shall be carefully protected. All supplies for my soldiers shall be paid for. No peaceable inhabitants shall be molested. The sole object for which the British force has been sent to Abyssinia is the liberation of Her Majesty's servants and others unjustly detained as captives ; and as soon as that object shall have been effected, it will be withdrawn.

'There is no intention to occupy permanently any portion of the Abyssinian territory, or to interfere with the government of the country.

(Signed) 'R. NAPIER.'

A copy of this well-worded and modest proclamation was received by Dajatchmatch Kussai, Ras of Tigre, who in plain Anglo-Saxon is entitled General Kussai, Prince of Tigre. On the receipt of the letter the Prince manifested his admiration of it, and desired to see the writer, or an envoy from him, who should have the power to arrange for a meeting between the writer and the Prince ; as he, the writer, would be compelled to travel through his country to Magdala, and it would be highly politic for both sides to be friends. The following is the letter sent by Prince Kussai to Sir Robert Napier, which to my taste is as well worded as the English chief's :

'IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE HOLY GHOST.

'Letter sent by Dajatchmatch Kussai, head of the Chiefs of Ethiopia, to reach the Chief of the English soldiers.

'How are you ?

‘Very well ?

‘By Christ’s grace I have recovered the throne of my ancestors, of Mikael, of Welda Selasse, of Sabagadis. Of old we are house friends, from Consul Salt till down to Plowden. I expected to receive a letter from you ; but, as it has been retarded, I have sent myself. I know not what you have come for ; if I knew, it would please me. We are home friends. I am sending by Muroja, the son of Atu Waiku, who knows my language and yours. I am sending (what I have in) my heart, and you too send to me (what you have in) your heart. In the year 1860 from Christ in the time of John the Evangelist, in the month of Hadar the 18th written Wednesday.

(Signed) ‘DAJATCHMATCH KUSSAI.’

Head seal of the Chief of (Levi of India) Ethiopia.

In the above, Prince Kussai, we are led to believe, has laid bare his heart—in short, sent (what he has in) his heart ; and Sir Robert Napier is politely requested, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, for (what he has in) his heart.

For purposes of polity—and the English General will show himself, as we proceed, to be not only a skilful soldier but a diplomat of the first rank—a gentleman, Major James Augustus Grant, C.B., of Nile Exploration fame, was sent with much backsheesh to the head of all the chiefs of Ethiopia.

Major Grant was well received as the English chief’s envoy—treated to the best, and shown every civility, and a meeting was finally arranged to be held between the English and the Tigrean chiefs.

Sej Muroja was sent as the Tigrean ambassador, and he was received with due solemnity by General Napier and his Staff. Complicated military evolutions, sham fights, and much drum-beating were shown to him ; and the decorous Tigrean ambassador departed on his way back to his chief, thoroughly perplexed and mystified by what he had seen, but certain of one certainty, that the ‘Feringhees’ were the most remarkable people he had ever beheld—which was very true.

He sent messengers again, and from afar viewed the result. The hearty and kind reception which they one and all received finally decided the prudent Kussai, and a day was named and a place appointed, whereat the two ‘home friends’ should meet.

On the evening previous to the day of the meeting, Sir Robert Napier moved on with the 2nd Brigade to occupy the station called Ad-Abaga. The Tigrean chief was to have encamped at a

place called Haussein ; but he did not, and gallant Sir Robert was compelled to wait at Ad-Abaga until the savage potentate, who arrogated to himself the title of 'Chief of the Chiefs of Ethiopia,' should arrive. He waited eight days ; and, when his patience was well-nigh exhausted, another messenger arrived at a most happy moment, and announced the arrival of the king at Haussein.

On the next morning Sir Robert Napier sallied out of his camp, in the comfortable basin-like valley of Ad-Abaga, with a column consisting of 500 infantry, 300 cavalry, a small party of the Royal Engineers, and four 12-pounders—a most compact, soldierly little force, but ridiculously at variance with the estimate at which the chief of Tigre had placed the English army.

With Snider rifles thrown over their shoulders, with a day's rations in their haversacks, and with a military band preceding them, playing some lively tune, the little army marched on. The shining steel rifles glimmered against red uniforms and sun helmets, and dazzled the eye ; the steel scabbards rattled, spurs jingled, as the trumpet gave the signal to march. Behind these came the little gun battery, the cannon looking demure enough on the backs of the mules ; and slouching in the rear, waving their trunks from side to side, were the elephants, with houdahs on their backs, and mahouts snugly seated on the napes of their necks.

The Commander-in-Chief, mounted on a magnificent charger, with a brilliant Staff, cantered on ahead of the column.

In good order, as compact as when they started, the little army arrived upon the field of the expected durbar,¹ Mai-Debar. Happy place ! most auspicious for the interchange of courtesy and goodwill between man and man was the valley of Mai-Debar.

The muskets were stacked, the cavalry dismounted, and the soldiers, after drinking the pure liquid from the stream hard by, stretched themselves upon the sward, and awaited with admirable unconcern the advent of the barbarian Prince.

The General and his Staff sauntered up and stood upon the spire of the highest eminence, to watch the approach of the expected cavalcade.

Far away the mountainous Debra Demba pierced the clouds in the distance ! Ambitious ambas towered in every direction above plains and valleys. Amba Shukulat was in the rear, Mount Masoba was in front, and Mount Arnedin guarded the

¹ Durbar : Hindostanee term for levée, or council.

Dongola defile ; and directly ahead was another shaped like a spur. A squall of wind dissolved clouds of dust, and the British videttes discovered Prince Kussai's army advancing.

'Everyone to his place, clap your knapsacks upon your backs, snatch your rifles ! fall in, dress up soldiers, and look your best !' In an instant of time the orders were obeyed. A solid line of scarlet-dressed infantry ; on their right picturesque squadrons of cavalry ; to their left a battery of field-guns, manned by tall fellows with swab and rammer at their side, stand ready, drawn up on one side of the little stream in admirable order.

The English chief hurried to his tent and made his toilette deliberately. His Staff surrounded the tent, and some mysterious conversation was held ; after which three officers, attended by a detachment of the 3rd Light Cavalry in blue and silver uniform, suddenly dashed off towards the Prince, and informed him that the English General would advance simultaneously with him.

A sonorous rumbling of kettledrums and sharp words of command were heard on the heights opposite. The Abyssinian force deployed, and presented an extended line of cavalry and infantry. Two or three fellows were seen galloping about, aligning its front. A scarlet tent was pitched, and someone, who was probably the Prince, was seen entering.

Ten minutes of patient waiting, and the Prince had mounted a gaily-caparisoned pony, and an English officer rode with hot haste to inform the General that the Prince was coming.

The General issued out of his tent, and a large elephant decked in holiday ribbons and trappings, that was standing near the door, was mounted by him.

On this elephant, followed by another, and surrounded by his Staff and a select body of cavalry, General Napier proceeded towards the stream.

The Prince bore down the hill with 500 choice warriors, forming a wing on each side of him. Over his head was held the State umbrella, of maroon-coloured plush velvet, heavy with silver ornaments, by a very handsome man. At his right side was his spear and shield-bearer ; at his left his fusil-bearer—the son of a Tigrean grandee. His generals preceded him on foot, being preceded in their turn by two of the English officers who went to meet him.

On the banks of the tiny stream Napier met his princely ally. Both dismounted, and a loving embrace followed ; much after the style of American Indian sachems embracing Peace Commissioners. The Prince was apparently fervent ; Napier passive, almost ungraceful, in this new mode of greeting.

Together, both Prince and Napier entered the durbar tent. Five head princes of Kussai's retinue, with shield-bearer and 'gold stick' privileged by their position, entered the council tent, with a dozen of Napier's principal officers. At the same time a salute was fired by the artillery, the noise of which caused visible commotion among the array of horses and men on the opposite side of the stream ; and great uneasiness among the dusky warriors, who, with tilted lances, looked down upon the red-coated army below.

Sej Muroja, the consequential ambassador already mentioned, when all were seated in the tent, broke the silence first, by initiating a most formal *tête-à-tête* between the English General and Prince Kussai.

Kussai had a very gentle, amiable countenance, but appeared as if he might have been termed the 'Unready,' from the irresolution apparent on his features.

'Greet the Feringhee Negus for me,' said he to his satellite, Sej Muroja ; and Muroja forthwith related to Napier, with some embellishment, the words of his master.

Sir Robert replied that he was very happy to see him, and said that it was with great pleasure a Christian nation like the English beheld people professing the same creed in Abyssinia.

In answer, Kussai said that he did not much like to see strangers in his country ; but, since come strangers must, he preferred they should be Christians.

This certainly did not seem to portend very amiable feelings towards the English, while it was evident that, in spite of Major Grant's diplomacy, much suspicion was entertained of the crusaders' intentions. 'But,' Sir Robert said, 'if we came here, it was because bad men held our countrymen in captivity. When we have released them, we shall go back to our own country without disturbing your dominion in the least.'

'That's right,' replied Kussai. 'Theodore is a bad man ; I hope sincerely you will punish him as he deserves.'

The General then kindly inquired the names of the Tigrean chiefs in his retinue, and it was ascertained that one of them was an elder brother, and two were his uncles. All the chiefs wore vantbraces of gold, and lion-skin tippets.

The presents which were intended for the Prince were then brought out and exhibited. These consisted of one double-barrelled rifle by Purdey of London, some Bohemian glass vases, and an Arab charger belonging to Sir Robert's excellent stud. They were all accepted by the Prince with profuse thanks.

At this juncture the meeting broke up ; that is, all the chiefs

and officers left the tent, excepting Sir Robert Napier, his military secretary, and the Adjutant-General on one side ; and Prince Kussai, his brother, and Sej Muroja on the other side.

What followed cannot be given in detail ; but the result of the secret conference was, that Prince Kussai agreed on his part to allow free passage to the English troops through his country ; and, furthermore, promised to aid and abet them as much as lay in his power with supplies of food, which the Commissariat Department was of course to purchase and pay for at reasonable rates. He furthermore expressed a wish that some aid might be given to him after the result of Theodore's defeat, as he would then need it. To which Sir Robert promised everything, except in the matter of constituting himself the safeguard or an ally to the Prince, as he was bound but to obey the Queen of England's behests ; which were to release his countrymen and leave the country as he found it, without committing himself in any such way as the Prince desired. With this Kussai was obliged to be content, satisfied that, if he could not get the aid of the English, no other potentate or Ras could.

The interview then over, and goodwill and friendly understanding prevailing among the heads of the party, wine and spirits were partaken of, and the parties hobnobbed with each other, after the Saxon custom of drinking ' Waes Hael.'

The troops were then paraded and drilled for the edification of the Prince and his army.

The British soldiers marched and countermarched, wheeled to right and left, deployed, marched by columns of companies on the double quick, all at the sound of drum and fife, and other military music, to the intense admiration of the guest, who critically viewed these proceedings.

In his turn Sir Robert Napier crossed the stream, accompanied by the king, to see the Abyssinian troops.

They were a fine body of men, well formed and athletic, and certainly well adapted for irregular warfare. There were between five and six hundred of them, armed with muskets, matchlocks, double-barrelled guns, Portuguese fusils, and guns of all nations. The infantry were simply armed with spear, shield, and sword, according to their means. They might make as formidable antagonists in a mountainous country as any trained troops would wish to encounter ; but, with all their fine appearance, they had never been able to stand before the Emperor Theodore's troops.

The Prince, after a review of his troops, invited the English General to enter his gorgeous tent where everyone was seated

on the carpets, spread on the ground. Cakes, tej (fermented honey), herbs, and arrachi were produced, and all partook of them. Before leaving, Kussai declared Napier a great general and a great man, and, doffing his own lion-skin cape, clothed the general's shoulders with the hide of the forest king. He also presented him with his shield and spear. The shield was a masterpiece of Gondar genius. Its umbo was covered with solid gold, and the edges of the shield were decorated with tuberous masses of filagree gold and silver. From its centre drooped a strip of lion's mane.

The opinion which the Abyssinian soldiers had of the English army was, that on an open field English troops would be perfectly unattackable, but that on the mountains they could do nothing. The cannon were not so large as what they had been led to expect by their camp gossips. (Breech-loading Armstrongs with double shells they had no very high praise to bestow upon.) They had heard also, through the same dubious authority, that the English army had a species of weapon which could throw whizzing balls of fire through the air for the purpose of setting fire to houses two or three miles off. These (rockets) were weapons of enchanters. The English, according to their ideas, practised enchantment in many things; and though they had not such big cannon as the Emperor had, and could not fight very well on mountains, still, when they could not conquer by force of arms, they could have recourse to their enchantments, and were therefore invincible and entitled to respect.

Had Sir Robert Napier only expended half-a-dozen shells and rockets in exhibiting the real power of the contemned Armstrongs, much lasting benefit would have accrued therefrom; but little was known of what Theodore's power was, or of what sort of fortress he had at Magdala, and he cared not, in such a case, to waste his projectiles of war in a mere exhibition.

There was a general embracing before the head dignitaries departed, and each chief vowed to do his best in behalf of the other.

CHAPTER VI

ANTALO—MODE OF MARKETING

At Antalo, Smelfungus and myself found the pioneer force, under Lieutenant-Colonel Phayre, Quartermaster-General of the Expedition. We were no more to travel alone at will across the country ; our future marches would be made with the army.

I have been minute in describing our personal experiences from Zoulla to Antalo, because we were detached from all other company on the route. We had not yet become initiated into the reality of the campaign.

Until the army appeared at Antalo, I enjoyed myself in chasing jackals and hyænas, riding over the country at break-neck speed ; visiting the towns in the vicinity ; buying ghee (native lard), bread, milk, chickens, or, in other words, foraging.

A fair occurred every Wednesday at the town of Antalo, at which all the peasantry of the country assembled.

The first Wednesday that occurred after our arrival at this camp, I accompanied the Captain and some others to see one of these gatherings, where it was said the *élite* of Abyssinian society was to be found.

The ground marked out as the intended site of the camp was in the very centre of a plain which stretched from Antalo on the west of Afgool, 15 miles distant eastward, and was nearly equidistant between the former town and the ancient and interesting town of Chelicut. The stream Gundwa, or the remains of it during the dry season, ran round the western extremity of the camp. All this luxuriant country was covered with tall grass, which afforded admirable grazing for the animals of the Expedition.

Once over the Gundwa, we put our horses to a smart gallop, and in about an hour we found ourselves at the base of a series of mountains, which rose higher and higher, until they were crowned by the scarped peaks of Amba Antalo, where, under the shelter of an overhanging mass, the town was built.

The ascent was fully 2,000 feet from the plain. As we surmounted the level whereon Antalo was built we passed two turreted buildings, which crowned the summit of the plateau. These we found to be churches ; on the top of each building was a cross formed of ostrich eggs, looking very like alabaster balls. Ascending still higher a steep hill, we entered a narrow street flanked on

each side by adobe walls some ten or twelve feet in height; and passing along this for a hundred paces or so we found ourselves in the market-place—a large open quadrangle, enclosed on all sides by the houses of the people, all of which were curtained from public view by mud walls. The square was filled to overflowing with people of all ages, who had come to the fair from the villages around. The men were dressed in robes of cotton cloth bordered by a deep band of crimson; the women were clothed in a cotton chemise, unzoned, hanging limp and loose about their persons, universally dingy with dirt. The young of both sexes were naked.

Near by was the straw-manufactured goods market, where umbrellas of straw, exquisitely plaited; baskets, cups, jars, cradles, plastered outside with *bois-de-vache*, baked hard. Near this, again, the market for the sale of tobacco was held. The weed had been compressed into a cake resembling a 'buffalo chip,' and emitted a horrible odour. Next to this was a miscellany of various commodities—iron, hair and shawl pins, silken neck strings, iron crosses, without which no Abyssinian Christian would be seen; strings of wax, jet, and amber beads; pumpkins, chillies, water-cresses, onions, honey, potatoes, garlic, leathern garments, goat-skin bags, water-sacks, and a long catalogue of other vendibles.

Every article that a European needed was priced at a dollar, though the article might barely be worth twopence; were it a bundle of wood, a few cakes of bread, a jar of milk, a dozen of eggs, the invariable price would be a dollar for each. The Abyssinians are a very apt people. Ten weeks before, a stranger coming to Antalo might have had the whole lot for a dollar; but the English strewed their dollar coins so very extravagantly!

From the town we went to visit the churches, which surrounded by the deep green of the sycamore looked picturesque. Like many other things which from a distance seem enchanting, the picturesqueness of the churches faded away as we approached. The outside resembled a cowshed, and the inside appeared not much better. In an adjacent house lived the priest. Seeing Europeans around, he begged us to enter his house, and after we had seated ourselves he proffered us horns of butter and goat's milk. We were rather astonished at this hospitality—unusual in our experiences from Zoulla to Antalo; but nevertheless drank our fill of the delicious beverage. He then brought us some parchment books and manuscripts, which he offered to sell. Not the least disinclined to add to our stock of curiosities, my friend and I purchased some half-a-dozen. When we were about

to leave, the priest asked us if we did not intend to pay for the 'haleeb' (milk). We had not intended ; but, since he had kindly hinted to us that the money for it would be acceptable, we paid him without much demurring, though we had given two dollars for the books.

Before entering the camp, my friend the Captain and I struck off over the mountains for a hunt. Hares, quails, guinea-fowls, and antelopes were plentiful, and my companion made me almost believe he had seen a wild boar.

It was late that afternoon before we turned our faces homewards. We had ranged over considerable ground, and had seen some very lovely dells and mountain scenery. The day was tending to a close ; the sun was declining over the far extended landscape, gleaming with a mellow light over the plain, purpling distant mountains, and flinging long shadows upon the grass from the tall cliffs overhanging the road.

My dear friend the Captain tried to interest me in recapitulating his wonderful adventures, and from the manner in which he related them to me it was evident that he was a very veracious person. The knowledge of the existence of genius in his person was mine by slow degrees ; for, whenever a thought passed across my mind in regard to my friend, the memory of his high rank and his vast riches caused obliviousness of what I was pleased to think was but a mere aberration of mind.

We had arrived within five miles of camp. The footpath to it was visible under the brightness of a full moon, except when now and then some projecting peak or crag, around the base of which we were riding, slightly shadowed the ground. A ravine or gully lay before us ; and in following the serpentine path we were compelled to describe an arc, so as to avoid a deep hole close by, which led us under the shadow of a high rock. So soon as we neared the rock a deep growl was heard ; and singular to relate, my companion, who had had such terrible combats with a boa-constrictor, a tiger and tigress, hastily backed his horse behind mine so as to more leisurely reconnoitre before making any further advance.

'What is the matter ?' I asked.

'Did you not hear the panther's growl ?' he asked me in return.

'Are you sure it is a panther ?'

'Quite positive.'

'Well, there he is, then, right close to your horse's leg,' I said.

'Where ? where ?' he asked, hastily pulling his horse backwards.

'There he is in that bush, close to you on your right. Look out with that gun; you will shoot me if you don't take care. Why, man alive, can't you see him? He is going to spring. Shoot him now, or you will be too late,' I yelled out to him.

'I can't see him, I can't see him!' he shrieked out, despairingly.

'Don't you see him crawling up to you?—about twenty yards off, on your right?'

'Oh, yes!' and pop—bang went both barrels. 'Is he dead?' he asked.

'He is down,' I replied.

'Ah ha! the right hand of the "old shekarry" hath not forgotten its cunning,' he said, with a burst of exultation. 'Did I not tell you, my boy, I never failed when I once drew a bead?'

'Yes, often and often,' was my response; 'but how was it you could not see the animal until he was close upon you? Are you afflicted with dysopsia?'

'Sometimes, in moments of great excitement.'

'You don't mean to admit that you were excited just now, do you?'

'Faugh! me excited? My dear fellow, I never was excited in my life.'

'Ah! I beg your pardon, I thought you were; yet it might have been an illusion of the senses. But what sort of animal have you shot?'

'Please see what it is, there's a good fellow, while I finish loading my gun.'

'Why, it's a hyæna,' said I, after looking upon the animal awhile, and internally wishing he had examined it himself.

'A hyæna, is it? Oh ho! very often the hyænas are more dangerous than panthers; for instance, if they get a hold upon anything with their teeth, they never let go.' And as he was talking thus, he drew closer, and just as he stood near its head the animal started up, and the Captain, though he had a double-barrelled gun in his hands, was indisputably though slightly startled. It was only a death spasm in the case of the hyæna, and a hunter's spasm in the case of the Captain. When the beast had ceased to breathe the 'old joker' came up and deliberately shot the carcase in the head.

It was late when we got back to the camp, having met with no adventure on the way save the shooting of a hyæna by my friend.

On March 3 the 2nd Brigade, General Napier, and General Sir Charles Staveley arrived at our camp at Antalo. It was a

most exciting scene. The news of the approach of the 'burra, burra Sahib' (big, big master) with the Feringhee army, had roused the whole province of Enderta, of which Antalo was the capital. Thousands of scantily-costumed warriors, and women, and brown-skinned little Cupids lying in litters on the roadside; old age and youth, male and female, priests and laymen, had ranged themselves on both sides of the road for a mile or so, to await the advent of the Grand Sahib and his host.

Regimental bands had gone forth to salute their comrades with welcoming music.

General Collings and staff, Colonel Merewether, and other officers had ridden out to meet Sir Robert Napier.

The General and his army came at last, preceded by a host of musicians. First came an Irish regiment, each soldier bearded like a pard, and bronzed by the tropic sun, all veterans inured to campaigns in India, Himalaya snows, and fervid days in Scinde. Above their heads waved the regimental banner which was tossed several times on the deadly fields of the Iberian Peninsula, and had received reverence from Wellington.

Then came the 4th Regiment, the 'King's Own,' with a regimental flag tattered and torn by storms of fire and lead in the Crimean campaign. After these came the Native troops, the 27th Native Infantry, called the Punjaubees, tall men from the Punjaub districts of India; the Belooch Regiment with ample green turbans, and red fezes round their heads, dressed in green uniforms with red facings; and the 10th Native Infantry, composed of sepoys, who were taken from particular districts and tribes. Each man of the latter regiment had thirty or forty kinsmen in the ranks.

After them, again, came the cavalry, the Scinde Horse, with plaited crimson cloth folded round their heads like turbans. They were dressed in green cloth uniforms, and their horses had green shabracks. Each man was armed with a short double-barrelled rifle and tulwar.¹

The officers wore silver helmets on their heads. Behind the cavalry regiment came Sir Robert Napier and Sir Charles Staveley, attended by their respective staffs, well dressed and mounted. Some effeminacy was visible here which detracted much from their otherwise martial bearing. One lordling wore kid gloves and a green veil.

The Head-quarter staff was followed by a company of the 3rd Light Cavalry, Native Indian, all soldierly-looking men, though

¹ Indian sword.

some of them, native officers, bobbed along in their saddles as if they were riding to rackets on a hard-mouthed native tattoo,¹ displaying immense calves through the lack of straps to their trousers. The uniform of this troop was a bluish grey, with white shoulder-straps and cuffs.

In the rear of these came the artillery, a battery of six Armstrong guns : the elephants and the transport train, the whole stretching over a distance of seven miles. The muleteers formed quite an army by themselves.

There were 7,000 mules in the transport train attached to the 2nd Brigade of the 1st Division, commanded by Sir C. Staveley, and for these were required at least 3,000 men ; but, including the camp followers, mahouts, elephant attendants, and camel drivers, this force was increased to nearly 5,000 men.

Besides these people may be added the native sutlers, vendors of tobacco, ghee, haleeb, barley, bread, and herdsmen driving the beeves and goats for the commissariat. They were a prominent part of the procession, and figured conspicuously by their numbers and motley appearance. I must not forget, also, the multitude of dhoolie bearers,² dhobies,³ and the bheasties,⁴ who swelled to a large extent the strange multitude called together for the crusade. Such differing physiognomies were never seen in one modern army ; while their uniform, clothes, rags, turbans, tarbooches, were of all colours.

Poles from the Bastarnic Alps and bearded stalwart fellows from the Sarmatian wilds chatted gaily with voluble Frenchmen and staid-looking Germans. The turbaned Turk, with the passionate fires of his temperament somnolent under the virtues of his inseparable narghileh, trudged along leisurely, with no desire on earth save that which he was then exercising ; and swarthy Arabs inhaling fumes of a sweet morsel of Latakieh. The olive-cheeked Jew, remarkable for his limpid eyes of jet, stalked onward at the head of his little string of mules—for the nonce oblivious of the country, the crusade, and his occupation, indulging in day-dreams of some treasure he had hidden somewhere, or of his elevation into the business of a diamond-merchant on his return from African territory. Esurient-looking Parsees ever on the look-out for a chance to turn an honest rupee into two, plodded onward industriously side by side with parlous Jewish muleteers. Sikhs from the Mahrattas held animating conversations with Sepoy guards from the Deccan ; and rolling on in

¹ Pony.

² Hand ambulances.

³ Washermen.

⁴ Drivers of oxen bearing water

never-ending succession were Somalis from Somali Land, Berbera men, Bengalees, Shchoes, Nubians, and Hazortites.

The column, in spite of its martial air, had something of a piebald look. There were white men, red, tawny, yellow, and black men, all mingled up confusedly. Cockneys from London, Celts from Ireland, and sandy-haired Scotchmen marched side by side with Hindoos.

The commissariat mules were unloaded of their treasures at the park of the department; the baggage animals emptied their miscellaneous packs near their owners' tents, and were then marched off to their encampment near the river Gundwa.

The Artillery wheeled leftward to their quarters on an eminence, and the furbishing of steel cannon and gear, the watering of horses and distributing of rations began, and the audible bustle and the hum of a vast camp commenced in this encampment on African soil, as it would in any other country.

Around the commissariat was shortly seen a strange sight, which I might have witnessed many a time on the march to Antalohad I accompanied the army thither.

The dollar bags were brought out by the Parsees who transacted business with the natives. Some order amid such a concourse was necessary when hundreds of Abyssinians, having heard of the liberal payments made by the English, contended who should first dump his goat-skin bag full of barley into the scales, and handle the bright new coins, their favourite money, the sight of which always made their eyes sparkle with unusual brightness. Chuprasses¹ were already on the ground, arranging—with almost futile attempt at order—the eager, expectant Abyssinians. The natives brought barley, flour, oats, grain, bread, honey, herbs, wood, cattle, goats, sheep, mules, mussucks,² leather straps, etc.

There were about a dozen Parsees employed by the assistant commissariat to purchase the provisions for the force. To avoid confusion, they were set apart ten paces from each other, so that the bread should not be thrown with the flour, and the chickens and ghee should not get mixed up with the bread; and the wood should not be thrown among the chickens.

Each man was surrounded then by the market people, and he and his bag of dollars was shrouded from all obtrusive observation. To men who from childhood are trained to deception and lying, the tempting bag of dollars was irresistible. Any person watching the scene for a moment would have been able to detect go-betweens—Parsee boys mixing in with the crowd, and by-

¹ Policemen.

² Bags made of animal hides.



MAJOR-GENERAL SIR C. STAVELEY, K.C.B.

and-by receiving a certain quantity of dollars, and who, upon receiving the money, slowly edged out again to disappear among some black tents, the homes of their employers, which were situated near the commissariat park. During one day these by-plays would occur very often, and probably each of the sellers of provisions cleared something between seventy-five and a hundred dollars.

Strange to say, I never heard of a Parsee being brought up on a charge of theft. Their influence was so great that I suppose it would not have been politic to be very harsh to them. There were but few officers who were not indebted to some one or other of these clannish people. Little bills could not be cashed without their aid ; and, as military officers are generally freer with their money than any other people, in an extravagantly priced country like Abyssinia applications of that nature were frequent. To have applied to the military chest would have been an abnormal proceeding ; and they therefore chose to pay high discount to those Indian usurers, rather than take a little trouble to check the nefarious proceedings of the Parsees.

I stated above that the transport-train, after unloading, had been withdrawn to their encampment near the river. For the better understanding of the term transport-train, I shall proceed to a description of it, as in the following pages the words will be frequently repeated.

The general transport-train was raised in Bombay for service in Abyssinia on February 14, 1868, but it may be said to have derived its origin from the two Punjaub trains specially organised in October of the preceding year for the campaign in Africa, to which it owes its foundation and organisation.

The Highland transport-train was organised for service in the Highlands of Abyssinia, a portion of which conveyed the baggage and provisions for the first and second Brigades of the First Division, under Sir Charles Staveley, now marching towards Magdala, while the lowland transport-train was reserved for service between Senafe and Zoulla.

The Highland transport-train consisted of four divisions of 2,000 mules, each subdivided into troops of 150, and the following was the scale of the establishment of each division :

- 1 Captain.
- 3 Subalterns.
- 4 European inspectors (elected from British regiments).
- 20 Jemadars, or Troop Sergeant-Majors.
- 80 Duffadars, or Serjeants.
- 667 Muleteers.

- 2 First-class Nalbunds, or Farriers.
- 10 Second-class Assistant Nalbunds, or Farriers.
- 1 Head native Blacksmith.
- 10 Second Assistant Blacksmiths.
- 10 Bheasties, or 'Water Carriers.'
- 2 Rope-makers.
- 1 Salootrie, 'Native Veterinary Surgeon.'
- 1 Moonshie, or Native Writer.

At the commencement of the campaign one man had charge of two mules only ; and they were as much as he could look after properly. Stable, watering, and all other line duties at fixed hours were conducted with the same routine as in the Bengal irregular cavalry regiments. The muleteers were trained and drilled to their work, and kept in as strict a state of discipline as the circumstances of its being a newly raised corps would admit of. The Jemadars kept in Persian the nominal roll of each man in their troop, also the pay account. The 'long roll' of every man was kept in Persian by the moonshie ; the pay account was kept in English by the captain.

The officers commanding the Punjaub trains had summary powers, and could sentence to two years' imprisonment in addition to corporal punishment. The whole was under the direction of a sub-director, who was one of the head-quarter staff, and reported direct to the assistant quartermaster-general, army head-quarters, assisted by a staff officer and officer inspector, the latter of whom constantly travelled from one station to another, and reported direct upon all matters that might come under his observation. The train worked regularly between Attigratt and Magdala, principally in carrying baggage, ammunition, hospital stores, and commissariat supplies for the force for one month. At intermediate large stations a staff officer had been permanently appointed to receive all reports from officers in charge of convoys, and he forwarded the same to head-quarters. At these posts several reserves were kept, from which sick and weakly mules were replaced. Mules purchased in Spain, Egypt, India, Persia, and Abyssinia were employed.

The Spanish mules were generally large and ill bred ; and, from my own observations, were naturally of a weak constitution, and unable to bear great changes of climate. They suffered much from a want of a sufficiency of food, especially of grass, of which they did not eat enough, even when it was procurable ; for that which was obtained was dry and coarse, and they did not relish it. When once in low condition it was almost impossible to bring them round, even with rest and grazing, abun-

dance of which they got at the sick depôts. The few well-bred Spanish mules there were answered well. The Persian, Indian, and Egyptian mules, on the contrary, were very much more enduring, required less grain, would eat any description of grass, and thrive upon it.

The Abyssinian mules were not very enduring ; all those purchased were in good condition and fresh ; still they broke down in larger numbers than any others. On March 1 there were 5,412 animals in the Highland train, and of these 1,002 were sick. On April 1 there were 6,691, and of these 1,002 were sick. On May 1 there were 7,690, and of these 1,944 were sick. Since March 1 there were purchased in the country on the Highlands 2,720, and 1,740 were transferred from the Lowlands. Since the same date there were lost on the road 449, and 1,257 were sent to the Lowland sick depôt at Koomaylee and struck off returns ; and 309 were destroyed or died at Highland sick depôts. 2,418 were discharged from hospital and sent to work. The mules had scarcely a fair start, for they were generally put to work the day of disembarkation.

A marked difference was apparent in the working of the men who were sent to follow the army. Those who had the advantage of the experience resulting from the long march from Rawul Pindee, in India, to Kurrachee, in the Persian Gulf, a distance of nearly 1,000 miles, kept their mules in admirable condition, taking into consideration the difficulties and annoyances enumerated by Dr. Hallen ; while those men selected from the low rabble of Cairo and Alexandria, in Egypt, and sent by the hundreds for actual and necessitous service, soon had their animals in a most woful plight. They were, besides being fractious and turbulent, entirely unequal to the task of climbing the rugged mountains, from their previous indolent habits.

The saddles in use were various ; the three principal were the Bombay pad, the cumbersome Turkish, an English saddle termed the 'Otago,' and the McMahon.

The Otago saddle in my opinion is the best that can be invented. It is made of good stout English leather. The sides are made of English leather sewn over two square pads, which overlap the flanks of the animal. These are connected by strong curved iron bows enclosed with leather, which rise three inches above the spine of the animal. Two hooks are fixed on each side, to which stout straps of the necessary length, folding any kind of baggage, are slung. Its weight is but 28 lbs. The McMahon is also a very compact saddle, but its excessive weight

of 66 lbs. precludes all possibility of its ever being adopted for general use.

The veterinary surgeon attached to the first division of the army of Abyssinia, whose report I have consulted concerning the cases of sickness and mortality so frequent among the animals, said that they were owing principally to 'hard work at great altitudes ; constant exposure, with want of rest ; insufficiency of food and bad quality of the grass, irregularity in feeding, galls owing to bad saddles, and want of time and means for repairing the same, and carelessness of muleteers in saddling and loading.' The muleteers were employed as ghora wallahs (grooms), in the position of public followers from the Punjaub, for the divisions raised in that district ; and men from the same part of India were subsequently substituted after their arrival at Antalo for the Arabs and Turks, as the latter were found to be indolent, apathetic, and totally unmanageable.

The Jemadars and Duffadars were selected from the most intelligent of the muleteers.

The officers of the transport-train were gentlemen who volunteered for the service out of regiments retained in India. They were a most abused set of men, by those who were not capable of appreciating the tremendous sacrifices they had made.

As soon as the road between Zoulla and Senafe had been made passable for wheeled carriages the train was strengthened by a supply of Bombay bullocks and Maltese mule-carts. But for this timely assistance it would have been sorely straitened, as mule-carriage in the Lowlands began to fail, and the supply of camels collected in Aden and Persia, which had for a while revived in quality and numbers, also began to diminish. The first passage of carts up the Senafe Ghaut, consisting of a convoy of eighty carts, in sole charge of a native military inspector, was so successful, that every effort was made to increase this kind of carriage. Captain L. A. M. Graeme, 102nd Foot, was chosen to raise and organise the cart division, and his efforts were crowned with the utmost success.

As the supply of draught mules had ceased, and those in use beginning to fail from hard work, with the sanction of the controller of supply and transport, Captain Graeme commenced converting mule-carts with broken neaps into bullock-carts with the ordinary yoke. This was a great success, as those in charge were enabled to purchase a very fair supply of draught bullocks from the natives of the country, and thus they had as many as 600 carts at a time available.

The veterinary department was a source of great anxiety to

head-quarters, for on leaving Bombay the establishment was miserably insufficient. However, among the French and Italian muleteers there were collected some eight or ten men who had a fair knowledge of the first principles of veterinary practice. This was the utmost help that could be rendered to the surgeons, many of whom were young men who had but recently entered the army, but who nevertheless by dint of energy and willingness did good service. These officers were under the immediate orders of Veterinary Surgeon Lamb, whose charge was an enormous one, consisting of upwards of 30,000 animals, even at a very early period, but which rose eventually to the number of 53,000 animals, with only ten surgeons to assist him. These gentlemen had to perform unusual duties under the existing state of things, having constantly to compound their own medicines, administer them, and attend individually to the washing and dressing of the animals in the sick dépôts, for want of subordinates to assist them.

The efforts made to procure sufficient animals for the Expedition cost much labour and money. The English consuls at Malaga, Alicante, Cadiz, Barcelona, Genoa, Tripoli, Beyrout, Constantinople, Smyrna, Gibraltar, and Malta were specially directed to use all means to procure mules. Officers accompanied by veterinary surgeons were despatched to examine and select those fit for service as they were brought to the several dépôts. Under the complicated system of English departmental government a larger number of officers was required for this work than were really needed, and as a consequence the whole became very expensive.

To expedite as much as possible the forwarding of stores to the front, and to aid the Lowland Transport Train, a short railway was laid, extending from Zoulla to Koomaylee. This prevented the possibility of the mules being kept on the Zoulla beach, which had proved so fatal to them when they first arrived; and obviated the necessity of sending the bullock-carts to travel over the hot sands.

As fast as each ship unloaded its cargo on the bunder¹ the coolie gangs loaded the railway cars, after which the locomotive rushed with its train to Koomaylee Station, a distance of twelve miles. Koomaylee was thus made a vast dépôt, and the arrangements were such that two or three hundred carts could load at the same time; and from thence to Senafe and Attigratt was a good road. The rails used in the construction of the railway

¹ Pier.

were very slight, weighing only 30 lbs. per yard, or 25 tons per mile. The sleepers were six feet long, and three fourths of a cubic foot in diameter. The locomotives, three in number, were poor, rickety things, but still well adapted to the task in hand. They managed to haul twelve or fifteen freighted cars from Zoulla to Koomaylee in an hour.

The telegraph proved most useful to everyone ; to the general officers as well as to the various dépôt superintendents. If there was a deficiency of provisions at one post, a telegraph message sent to the superintendent at Senafe or Koomaylee would bring a fresh supply in two or three days, or a news despatch could be sent to the mail steamer directly from the front, at the very last minute of her departure from Annesley Bay.

It was proposed, when the Abyssinian Expedition was first organised, to lay a Red Sea cable from Souakin, on the coast of Egypt, as far as Annesley Bay. From Souakin a telegraph could have been laid to Cairo, where it would meet with the Suez, Cairo, and Alexandria line, which connects with the London, Malta, and Alexandria cable. But the enormous outlay that the construction of the proposed line would demand deterred the English Government from pursuing this enterprise.

From Antalo to Magdala was but seventeen days' march, allowing ten miles for each day. General Napier, then, with some reason believed that thirty days would bring him before Magdala. For the transporting of the provisions for 10,000 men inclusive of muleteers and camp followers, for thirty days, allowing 150 lbs. for each animal, would require 4,000 mules ; for conveying baggage, tents, rocket and mountain guns, ammunition, etc., rather more than that number.

It would not do by any means to trust entirely to the supplies procurable from the country. With fifteen days' forage on hand, we might well hope, from previous experience, that we could keep starvation away. Halts might be frequent, extending the seventeen days march to two months, perhaps. Some flour and bread might also be expected from the country people, when once they had seen the glimmer of real silver coin. From which the reader may perceive that against contingencies the army was very well guarded by the skilful foresight of General Napier. What did happen on the eventful march will be seen in the following pages.

How far wrong and how far right Napier was in his calculations will also be seen. With one hundred thousand dollars in his treasury, Sir Robert Napier could do wonders. Backsheesh to chiefs and presents to village magnates were necessary, and

would insure, if it were possible, supplies of all kinds. Dollars were our only coin.

The currency in Abyssinia consists of blocks of rock salt eight inches long, one inch in width, and one in thickness. These are dug out from the salt plains of Hashed. No coin is recognised except the Austrian dollar of the year 1780, introduced, since that year, to replace the native gold withdrawn.

General Napier tried hard to introduce rupees or shillings in the country, and even wrote to Prince Kussai about it; but it soon proved impracticable. Had he been successful, the cost of articles would probably have been just one-half the prices that were paid.

The natives, besides being very tenacious for the dollar, were also very careful that the distinguishing marks were visible on the coin; otherwise they were refused altogether. These are a portrait of the Empress Maria Theresa, with a diadem of pearls around the head, a pearl brooch on the shoulder, and the mint mark S.F. It was very essential, therefore, that all the dollars were of the true orthodox stamp. As there were not enough dollars of that reign extant, new ones had to be coined, and it is a curious fact that 500,000 of this obsolete coin were struck at the Imperial Mint at Vienna expressly for the Abyssinian Expedition.

The first morning after the arrival of the army at Antalo, I determined to call upon the General-in-Chief, it being the custom in all countries for civilians to report themselves at the head-quarters of a military cantonment. Hitherto he had been invisible to me, engirt as he was by an impenetrable cordon of guards, and a barrier of brilliant uniformed officers, with high-sounding titles.

‘Can I see the General?’ I asked Captain S——, who was acting aide-de-camp, a fine, handsome, sturdy gentleman.

‘What General?’ said he inquiringly.

‘Sir Robert Napier, sir,’ I answered, blandly.

‘Oh! you mean his Excellency Sir Robert Napier?’ said he, slightly lifting his eyebrows.

‘Certainly, sir,’ I responded; ‘I mean his Excellency Sir Robert Napier, Lieutenant-General, Commander-in-Chief of the Abyssinian Expeditionary Field Force, now in Abyssinia.’

‘You cannot see him just now,’ he replied, with the ghost of a smile upon his features. ‘He is at breakfast.’

In the evening I called again, but his Excellency was busy with some native chiefs who had called to pay their respects.

The next morning I repeated my call, but unfortunately the

Commander-in-Chief was again at breakfast. In the afternoon I called once more, but he was taking his siesta.

The third morning I presented myself at the hour of nine, but he was asleep, having been very busy until midnight the night before. In the afternoon, at two o'clock, I paid a visit at head-quarters, but he was at tiffin.

The fourth morning I called at the hour of eleven, and presented myself at Captain S——'s tent for the seventh time, with the view to obtain permission to call upon Sir Robert.

'Is his Excellency Sir Robert Napier engaged, sir?' I asked, very politely.

'Ah! may I ask your name, sir?' said Captain S——.

'There is my card, sir.'

'H'm! yes, I see. Mr. Stanley, Correspondent of the "New York Herald." If you will be kind enough to seat yourself, I will go and inform Sir Robert.'

I seated myself, and began to imagine what sort of a reception I should receive from the Commander-in-Chief.

'Sir Robert Napier will be happy to see you, sir,' broke in Captain S——.

Following this officer, I entered a commodious tent used as an ante-chamber, lined with yellow cotton and carpeted with Persian carpets, and partitioned from the interior by a silken curtain. Sitting at a table covered with newspapers and documents was a man in an undress uniform, with slightly greyish hair and moustache, looking as serene and contented as a farmer who had just been over his estates, and was satisfied with the expectation of a good harvest.

'Mr. Stanley—Sir Robert,' was the introduction of Captain S——.

At the sound of a voice the serene-looking gentleman rose and acknowledged the introduction with an affable inclination of the head, inviting me to a seat by a motion of his hand.

'Allow me, Sir Robert, to show you what introductory letters I may have for your examination.'

After reading them, he said that he was most happy to see me, and enquired whether I had been accorded every facility for accompanying the Expedition.

'No, sir; not quite,' said I. 'I was informed, by a telegram from the Secretary of the India Office, that all facilities would be afforded me, but I cannot say that I have experienced any yet. What I have is my own, save one baggage animal given me at Zoulla. I was misled when I arrived at Zoulla, by persons who said that you were about to make a dash upon Magdala, and I

refused a tent upon that account; but I soon found my error, and applied for one, but without success. If you can let me have a tent and a baggage animal, I should feel quite comfortable.'

'How did you come from Senafe?' he asked in a kind tone.

'With Captain Smelfungus. He and I live together in a *tente-abri*.'

'How! Is Captain Smelfungus in this camp?' he asked, in astonishment.

'Yes, sir; I have just left him.'

'H'm! I was not aware of that; but to recur to yourself. Really I do not believe that I can spare you a tent for yourself alone, as I intend to make forced marches towards Magdala. All officers are expected to live there in a tent; and, if you can content yourself with your friend's accommodation, it will be by far the best plan. However, if you want a tent very badly the Quartermaster-General is authorised to sell to civilian gentlemen what they need. Horses, also, you can purchase from the natives about here. As for rations, I can give you an order upon the Commissariat, and you can settle there every month, or whenever they call upon you. I must not show more partiality to you than I do to the correspondents of the English Press; but whatever privileges they have shall be extended to you. I would advise you to take as little baggage as possible, because to-morrow the Adjutant-General will issue an order to reduce all baggage to seventy-five pounds. In that case you have all you need in your two horses and the *tente-abri*.'

'Thank you, General. I also wished to ask you if you will be kind enough to let me see any *précis* of intelligence concerning political matters you may think fit to send around to the other correspondents, as the "New York Herald" expects me to telegraph any news you may give me, or I may become acquainted with.'

'I shall be delighted. Certainly; you may see whatever the Adjutant-General, or Political Secretary, may give out to the other gentlemen.'

Before parting, the General kindly offered, if my ready funds failed, to supply me with any reasonable amount on a draft, and extended an invitation to me to dine with him that evening.

At seven in the evening precisely, the invited guests of Sir Robert Napier were assembled around the lengthy camp-table, heavy with plate, mugs and glasses, decanters and cruets. Smelfungus was of the party, wonderfully decorated with medals and orders of all nations. Before seating ourselves, Sir Robert made his appearance, dressed very unpretendingly in the dark undress

uniform which he generally wore. Introductions followed his appearance. Colonel Penn, of the Mountain Train Battery ; Colonel Fraser, of the 11th Hussars ; Captain Speedy, from New Zealand, the interpreter for the English army, and formerly commander of King Theodore's army ; Mr. Richard R. Holmes, archæologist from the British Museum ; Captain S—— ; Lord C—— H——, aide-de-camp ; Captain Harden ; Captain Smelfungus, of universal notoriety, and myself were then seated. I had the good fortune to be placed next to Speedy, and opposite to General Napier.

Everyone had provided himself with his own drinking-horn or glass, knife and fork, spoon, camp-castor, and napkins. The plate and other ware were the General's. His khansaman,¹ khitmigar,² and hamili,³ were very well-bred, quiet, and attentive servants, who knew by intuition the wants of each guest, and administered to them without any noise or disturbance to break or distract the harmonious clatter of table implements. The soup was brought in ; it proved to be an admirable and most nutritious dish, concocted out of compressed vegetables from the commissariat. Scarcely a word was uttered by anyone during the soup.

Then the *entrées* were brought in by the white-robed and cleanly servants, while the gentlemen leaned back in their chairs to obtain fresh strength for a renewal of their efforts.

The camp-manufactured wax candles diffused a soft light over the table in harmony with the pale yellow of the tent lining ; outside was heard the dull boom of bass drums, and the shrill sound of the fifes ; and now and then the cry of 'Post—all is well !' prosaic sounds in comparison with the romance of the scene enacted in General Napier's tent.

Indian patties, brain cutlets, and veal pies artistically gotten up were laid before us. As there was nothing of that chilliness apparent in set dinners, neighbours helped each other freely with the various viands.

Conversation was not very lively. All the gentlemen present were epicures in Indian cookery, and, like well-bred people, paid particular attention to the grateful dinner.

Then followed ragouts, potato cakes, vegetables and herbs of every description, cotelettes and fricassees, all of which received due attention. After these came beefsteak pie, boiled hump, roast fowls, and roast sirloin, cooked *à l'Anglaise*.

¹ Butler.

² Under butler.

³ Bearer or keeper of bungalows in India.

To close up the substantials came the *curry de poulet* and snowy rice, eliciting from the bearded gentlemen unqualified encomiums upon its delicate and piquant flavour. In my opinion the curry was abominable, giving me a foretaste of the liquid fire which is said to be the portion of all sinners in the Hereafter. When it was despatched it appeared to have unlocked the conversational powers of the whole party.

‘The pleasure of a glass of Abyssinian tej¹ with you, Captain Smelfungus,’ said Sir Robert Napier, blandly.

‘With the greatest pleasure, Sir Robert,’ replied the Captain, in blander accents; ‘I am a great admirer of tej.’

Simultaneously we all inclined our glasses to the General and to each other, and each drank with satisfaction a hornful of the native brewed beer.

A slight sketch of each, as they were all most notable persons in the campaign, and will be heard of often as we proceed, will not, I hope, be out of place here.

The General-in-Chief was a man of fifty or fifty-five years of age, stout and well built. His face was remarkable for the kindliness of the blue eyes, the genuine gentleness of the countenance lit up by them, and the smile that continually played around his lips. To all Sir Robert was extremely bland, affable, and kind; sometimes there lurked in his tones something akin to a sarcastic *politesse*, and at such times he was more plausibly phrased than ever.

Colonel Fraser was the very picture of a military *chevalier*, grand, yet polite at all times: a vigorous being, endowed with frankness, good nature, and redundant health.

Colonel Penn was a veteran in military matters, but not in age, being a youngish person. A frank and hearty cordiality and an irresistible energy were his principal characteristics.

Captain Charles Speedy was an Ajax in truth. His limbs might have challenged the envy of a Hercules; he stood six feet six inches in his stockings. The adjective ‘long’ could be affixed with justice to anything appertaining to him, except as to his sight. He was, in fact, short-sighted, and wore glasses at all times. The prominent features of his face were—high, salient cheek bones, a sloping brow, red bushy beard, and kindly blue eyes strangely contrasting with the determined expression of his mouth.

Lord C—— H—— was a manly-looking boy of twenty, with a full chest and a tall, robust figure.

¹ Abyssinian beer.

Mr. Holmes was a specimen of the British volunteer, on all occasions ready to uphold British dignity. He was out in Abyssinia to collect manuscripts and antique articles for the British Museum.

'Ah! that's a jolly drink,' said Speedy, uttering a pathetic sigh, and wiping his beard after the tej; 'a very jolly drink, say I.'

'How do the natives make it, Mr. Speedy?' asked General Napier.

'Well, General, there are different ways of making tej in this country. In this province they put a quart of honey in a five-gallon jar, also a quart of strongest arracki; they then fill the jar with water, and let it stand for about five days, when the whole will be well fermented and ready for use. Theodore is a famous man for the manufacture of good beer, but he seasons it pretty strongly with the arracki.'

The dessert was brought after this extraordinary revelation; and, while the delicious blancmange and custards were discussed, topics of conversation were skilfully introduced by the Chief.

With Mr. Holmes Sir Robert started a conversation about spiritualism, during which it transpired that the General knew much about that cabalistic science.

When the coffee was brought, and our Habanas (the gift of Sir Robert) were fairly lit, the General commenced on other subjects. It must not be imagined that he monopolised the conversation; quite the contrary. Nor was conversation confined to any one subject; it embraced literature, fine arts, poetry, sculpture, philology. From these subjects we drifted by easy stages to a learned dissertation upon Governments, to relative comparisons between Monarchical Governments and Republics, where the General most strenuously maintained his opinions by quotations from classical lawgivers and modern essayists, of course in favour of the supreme excellence of the Constitutional Monarchism of England.

CHAPTER VII

SMELFUNGUS AND I PART—THE BRITISH PRESS—IRRESPONSIBLES AND THEIR PROPHECIES—UNHAPPY THEODORE!—POOR CAPTIVES!—POLITICAL INTELLIGENCE—SIR ROBERT'S ABLE GENERALSHIP AND DIPLOMATIC TALENTS—DELAY IS EXPLAINED—THE 'ELEPHANTS OF ASIA' IN ABYSSINIA—THE TRANSPORT TRAIN.

IMMEDIATELY after the events recorded in the last chapter I found it expedient to dissolve my connection with my friend Smelfungus. Accordingly I purchased of him his tent, and, moving up to head-quarters, pitched it close to Captain Speedy's, the place appointed me by the Quartermaster-General.

After the dinner at the Commander-in-Chief's quarters, during the two weeks the army remained at Antalo the invitations to mess came thick upon me.

The English Press was very ably represented in Abyssinia. I do not mean remarkable in any invidious sense ; but each one, really and truly, was remarkable, after his own kind. The 'specials' messed together ; and though there were contrasting elements in their natures, yet they seldom disagreed ; in fact, there was as much harmony in the Press tent as in any other bell-shaped domicile in the army.¹

The campaign, in spite of the darksome prognostications of legends of irresponsible people, continued slowly but surely.

Very few indeed had as yet fallen victims to the voracious carnivorous animals that were said to infest every mountain-forest, and plain in Abyssinia.

Not one had, as yet, mistaken poison for honey, or died by eating the delicacy ; neither had a soul suffered any great inconvenience from drinking water from old wells.

No Haoussas had been found, neither had the Shohoes, the Agames, or the Hazortites proved unfriendly ; rather the reverse. Whatever the Commissariat chose to buy could be bought.

No hippopotami had crossed our paths, nor had any lions and cheetahs frightened any one of us with their glaring eyeballs in the dark ; no loathsome cerastes had nestled in our blankets ; no disgusting yellow-spotted, pink-headed fly had been seen.

¹ The British Press was represented by Dr. Charles Austin, D.C.L., *Times* ; George A. Henty, Esq., *Standard* ; W. Owen Whiteside, Esq., *Morning Post* ; Alex. Shepherd, Esq., *Daily News* ; Lord Adare, *Daily Telegraph*.

The murderous tette had vanished out of sight and out of our minds ; the tzaltzalya had hastily stolen away ; the earth was fair to look upon ; the mountains looked down benignantly upon us ; the plains laughed joyously for us ; the water flowed abundantly from the spouts of Norton's pumps ; even the air appeared to be healthier at Antalo.

A general order was issued that a further advance would be made in two or three days, with the command that all soldiers should reduce their kits to seventy-five pounds, and that officers must positively limit their baggage to seventy-five pounds, and their studs to two horses. It was further decreed that twelve soldiers should club together in one tent, and that two officers must be contented to live together in a tent.

The Pioneer Force, under Quartermaster-General Phayre, was ordered ahead to clear the road, remove obstructions, and report on the prospects in the front. Two days passed by, and the report was presented by a courier from Colonel Phayre, with a clause, however, that a road could not be made across the Aleggie range in less than a week.

'It cannot be accomplished sooner,' he wrote ; 'the country before us is nothing but a succession of ranges intersected by deep gaps and tangled ravines. The slopes of the mountains are almost perpendicular ; a series of terraces, or escarpments, must be cut through before the army can hope to proceed further.'

'So, this is bad news,' said Napier to Speedy ; 'I wonder if no other way can be found without going too far out of our way?'

Speedy asked of some of his spies the best way to Lake Ashangi, our first objective point.

'Oh, the road was easy ; there was a path would take the army clear to the Lake,' replied the spies.

These sanguine people were sent with Captain M'Gregor ; and a path was found, both straight and clear, without any deviation from the intended route.

It is a noticeable fact that the literal truth was never told in Abyssinia. Abyssinians are clever liars, and everything related of the country ahead was certain to be found false as we journeyed along. Colonel Phayre's reports, when based upon native information, were sure to be belied by the official *précis* of the following day.

We were as ignorant of the next day's station as though a Quartermaster-General had not been sent before us to explore and lay down the line of march.

One day we received intelligence that the vineyards of Abys-

sinia had been found ; that the country presented the aspect of superlative civilisation ; that the maidens were very Cleopatras and Judiths in their nut-brown beauty and queenly graces ; that cultivated fields expanded as far as vision could reach.

I am not singular in these opinions. All the correspondents remarked the same peculiarities ; and it was passing strange, in such a deceptive atmosphere and illusive mirage, how anybody could ever say again one word of truth.

'Theodore was coming.' 'He was not coming.' 'He was sending presents.' 'He was retreating to Kuara.' 'He was fortifying near Lake Haik.' 'He was going to dispute the Bechilo Crossing.' 'He was sending presents and praying for reconciliation.' And he was doing neither.

Now that we have brought the Expeditionary Force to the point of moving forward from Antalo, let us glance for a moment at the political affairs of the country, and see how Theodore has been prospering since Britain declared war against him.

We left him in our introduction struggling manfully against a cursed fate, beating back the foes which beset him round about. His vast empire was dissolving. Towns and hamlets burning flashed their portentous blaze athwart the midnight sky ; wails of widowed women and fatherless children rent the air ; groans of dying warriors, murdered by cruel hands, called loudly to Heaven for vengeance !

It is said that 30,000 men, women, and children were destroyed by crucifixion, the relentless *courbach*,¹ or by shooting, stabbing, or decapitation, within three months. At such times he appeared like a demon. He was crazed with drunkenness and despair. He slew his best friends and councillors, and condemned to death tried and trusted warriors. Truly is it 'whom God purposeth to destroy, He taketh away his understanding.' Unhappy Theodore !

The white captives were in chains. His hatred of them was increasing. Three or four of them had been condemned to death, but the sentence had been commuted to imprisonment. The batch of English and German prisoners had but a precarious tenure of life at the best so long as they lay at his mercy. Theodore retained them under the impression that his own ends were attainable only through their safety.

The captives were supplied with money through Colonel Merewether's exertions in their behalf. Money was powerful even in

¹ *Courbach* : a whip, made out of hippopotamus hide.

prison, and their otherwise painful condition was greatly relieved through the luxuries which the money purchased.

The British Head-quarters now and then received pitiful letters from Consul Cameron, the Envoy Rassam, Lieutenant Prideaux, Surgeon Blanc, the reverend gentlemen Stern, Flad, and Waldmeier.

Consul Cameron indulged in harrowing phrases, and expressed himself as almost certain that he would never experience the joys of liberty again ; but he was resigned though melancholy.

Rassam prayed earnestly that Sir Robert Napier would deal leniently with Theodore, lest his vengeful temper should cause him to murder them.

Mr. Stern relieved his misery by writing florid accounts of the country, and interesting descriptions of the cruelty of the ' Wild Boar of Ethiopia,' and upbraiding the British Government for its unaccountable apathy.

Messrs. Flad, Prideaux, Blanc, and Waldmeier wrote very interesting epistles, wherein they endeavoured to enlighten the British public as much as possible concerning the habits and customs of the people.

The Emperor Theodore received the war proclamation with affected calmness, and showed his contempt by not replying to it, or to any letter sent by Sir Robert Napier. For a time the man was a mystery ; but information was smuggled into camp of his movements and his intentions through the aid of funds which Rassam possessed.

The following is a synopsis of the news received up to March 12, the date the army left Antalo for Magdala :

December 9, 1867.—Theodore was at Debra Tabor, continuing his imbecile course of alienating the affections of his men by 'killing them in great numbers.' He made incessant efforts to increase his army, but the largest number he could rally round him was 8,000 men.

December 15.—A messenger arrived from Mr. Rassam, bearing a letter which stated that a large force under Menilek, King of Shoa, was between Magdala, the prison fortress, and the Emperor's camp, and that there was an intention on Menilek's part to make a *coup d'état* in favour of the prisoners. Kussai, of Tigre, was professing friendship, but there were sinister reports that under the mask of friendship he intended some mischief.

December 19.—The reports about the Prince of Tigre were proved to be unfounded. A message came to camp from him wherein he asked, very naturally, why the 'Feringhees'¹ and he

¹ Ethiopian for 'English.'



HOUSE AT MAGDALA WHERE CONSUL CAMERON AND THE REV. MR. STERN WERE FIRST IMPRISONED

should not be friends? That his foes were Napier's foes, his interests British interests. 'Take therefore forage, and my prayers.'

December 20.—Kussai's ambassador arrived at Senafe, and was delighted with his reception. He returned home a sworn friend of the English.

December 22.—An important messenger from Mr. Flad arrived at Senafe. Theodore had swept down from the heights of Debra Tabor, and with one blow had annihilated Menilek, whose *coup d'état* was to liberate the prisoners. He had reached Magdala, and was then about to return to Debra Tabor with his captives.

December 25.—Dr. Krapf, the interpreter at that time for the army, returned from an exploring tour, and cross-questioned the messenger who brought the startling tidings on the 22nd inst. The man confessed it was all a falsehood, after it was proved to be so by the date of letters at hand. The attack upon Menilek had occurred in October according to the false tale-bearer; but the last letter received from Mr. Flad was dated November 7.

January 6, 1868.—Authentic information arrived through a letter received from the prisoners at Magdala, stating that Menilek had retired to his own country of Shoa without having accomplished any *coup d'état*. The country intervening between Magdala and the Emperor's camp at Debra Tabor was clear of all enemies.

January 15.—Information received that Theodore was moving upon Magdala with a force of 10,000 men and 20 cannon, and that Gobazyé, Prince of Samen, was following cautiously up with the view to watch his movements.

January 20.—Major Grant, the Nile explorer and *compagnon de voyage* of Speke, started on his mission to the Prince of Tigre with presents. Major Grant did good service in Abyssinia.

January 21.—A letter arrived from Rassam, stating: 'Theodore is moving slowly upon Magdala. Wagshum Gobazyé has run away. Theodore writes to me, "How are you? Are you very well? I am quite well. Fear not, I am coming to your assistance. Keep up your head; I shall soon be with you. I have one big mortar and plenty of long cannon. They make a terrible noise; but they are heavy to move."' Dr. Blanc wrote in this wise: 'We are delighted to hear you are coming to liberate us. How it will end no one can say. We have all prepared for the worst; but we have at least the satisfaction of knowing that our deaths will be avenged.'

February 2.—Captain Charles Speedy arrived from New Zealand, to act as interpreter for the English Army.

February 9.—*Précis* of intelligence furnished by officials read as follows : ‘Letters were received to-day by Colonel Merewether, the political officer, from Mr. Rassam and Dr. Blanc, dated Magdala, January 17, with inclosures from Mr. and Mrs. Flad, dated King’s Camp, *en route* to Magdala, January 9. All the captives are reported well up to date. A detachment of troops, which had left Magdala January 8, had joined the King in his camp, and had received charge of a party of about four hundred prisoners from the camp to Magdala. The imprisoned Europeans were among the number. Their leg-fetters had been removed, and handcuffs substituted, so that they might march. It is said that Mr. Rosenthal would accompany them. The King was using every endeavour to have the road made—working with his own hands, and making the free Europeans (his gun manufacturers) help. He had made some slight progress, and had arrived at the bottom of the valley of the Jeddah river. Mr. Rassam calculates he would reach Magdala about the end of February with his camp, though by abandoning the latter he could in one day arrive there. The people of Dalanta continued submissive, but others had rebelled again. His soldiers had suffered from the scarcity of provisions and transport. It was reported at Magdala that Menilek, King of Shoa, had again set out for Magdala, better prepared to act against Theodore than on his former visit. A detailed communication from one of the captives sent to one of his friends in England, and there published, has by some means reached the King’s camp, and is in the hands of Bardel. Apprehensions are entertained that it may do injury.’

February 12.—Ambassador of Tigrean Prince arrived. Friendly sentiments interchanged.

February 25.—Prince of Tigre arrived at the English camp at Houssein, and confirmed with his own lips friendly intentions.

February 27.—Another *précis* issued out, stating that ‘Wagshum Gobazyé and King Menilek were both near the Emperor Theodore ; so near that the camp fires of Gobazyé could be seen from Theodore’s camp. The Wagshum had sent him a message which was deemed impertinent, and Theodore therefore put the herald to death.’

March 6.—Monsieur Munzinger, French consul at Massowah, accompanying the field force as political adviser and interpreter, started on a mission to Gobazyé’s camp to endeavour to ally him with the English.

As we have traced the political features, a few comments are necessary upon the position in which Sir Robert Napier found himself in the midst of these little by-plays of Theodore, Wagshum Gobazye, King Menilek, and the Prince of Tigre.

Sir Robert Napier's aptness for command was established no less by his prudent advance into the interior of an apparently unknown country than in his skilful diplomacy with the Ethiopian potentates.

Theodore, through his unbridled passions, alienated from him every prince and ras, or chief, of any consequence in what was once his empire.

It therefore remained for Sir Robert to take advantage of this fact, and endeavour to retain that which Theodore had lost—the friendship of the natives. His well-balanced mind was admirably adapted for this task.

The chiefs gradually became stipendiaries of Sir Robert, and exercised but little their own wills, save in what was acceptable to his policy. Prince Kussai had been already secured. Wagshum Gobazye, Prince of Samen, was said to be inimical to Theodore, and it was reported that he had an army of 40,000 men prepared to fight him at any moment.

Monsieur Munzinger was despatched with presents and peaceable overtures to him.

Between Lasta and Enderta, in which latter province Antalo lay, another warlike chief was encamped on a precipitous mount thirty miles distant from Antalo. This man's name was Welda Yassous-Welda, son of Jacob—who was more like a robber chief than a recognised power. To this person Napier also sent invitations to visit him, with proposals for alliance and neutrality, to which warlike Welda gave equivocal replies, and Wagshum Gobazye was inclined to be more boastful than ever.

He was more inclined to neutrality than alliance.

‘But would he promise to permit his people to sell provisions to us if they were adequately remunerated?’ asked Sir Robert.

‘Yes; the people could sell what they wished; he would not prevent them. Was not Theodore his deadly enemy, as well as Napier’s?’

Sir Robert was a patient man. There were perpetual despatches, and complimentary letters issuing from head-quarters to him; presents were sent, with innumerable kind greetings and good wishes. No prince could well withstand such forethought of his success and such magnificent presents without feeling that it was incumbent upon him to reciprocate. The vanity of the

Wagshum was flattered by the attentions and kindness of the British Negus, and he yielded to them.

He wrote back a most gracious reply, declaring his intention to aid Napier as much as lay in his power, and his determination to attack Theodore as soon as circumstances permitted.

There was another person to the South of Magdala country whom it was wise to conciliate ; this was Menilek, King of Shoa. He had also an army of 40,000 men ready to attack Theodore. But he was such a peripatetic potentate, and not a settled entity like Gobazye and the Tigrean Prince, that it was doubtful whether communication could be had with him.

To the northward of Magdala, and left of our route to Theodore's prison fortress, ranged the Gallas under their respective queens—Queen Walkeit and Queen Regent Musteval—who professed Mahomedanism.

Sir Robert was prepared for all sorts of castes, nationalities, and religious faiths. In his train was a Mahomedan prince, Meer Akbar Ali, who had requested permission to follow the General. He was taken under the supposition that he would be useful. This Hindoo prince was a most proper person to enter into negotiations with Mussulman governors. His dark skin, his faith, his native love of finery was in his favour, and he was selected for the business of negotiating with these female royalties, to depart only when we should have arrived in the neighbourhood of the Galla lands.

Major Grant was also accredited to Welda Yassous ; and so well did he succeed in his mission, that Welda sent his brother to see the Feringhee General and accept proposals for peace.

Captain Moore, Arabian and Persian traveller and Arabic interpreter, was despatched with letters and presents to the local chiefs, and to assure them that there was no intention on the part of the English General to molest them in any way. His efforts were signally successful. The chiefs were unanimous in expressing a hope that the English General would conquer and occupy the country, as the liberal policy which guided him throughout in his intercourse with the natives was so completely at variance with their preconceived notions of his object, that they heartily desired that they could always experience the same.

Thus the seeming dilatoriness of the Old Soldier of China is explained. Besides the prosaic tactics of the march, there were delicate diplomatic tasks for him to perform before he could advance with confidence into the far interior.

When the report of the Quartermaster-General with the

Pioneer Force arrived, the army broke camp and marched for Musgee, eight miles distant from Antalo.

On account of the stupendous barriers said to be ahead, much anxiety had prevailed among us as to the nature of the country through which our route lay.

The march to Musgee did not warrant the word 'arduous.' It ran over a strip of the plain whereon our camp was situated near Antalo. Musgee was situated at its extremity, on a triangular area of ground washed by two streams of clear water.

Some officers managed to elude the strict letter of the order relating to baggage. Out of six servants of an officer, only two, perhaps, were left behind; and out of five baggage animals three had been retained, exclusive of the chargers; so that an immense train of followers and animals, extending over the whole distance between the two camps, accompanied the army, and by its exceeding length retarded rapid advance.

Marching with the army proved almost intolerable. The hardships of those whose business it was to keep up a lengthy correspondence after arrival at camp were but now commencing. After being in the saddle close to our baggage, to protect and escort it, for twelve or fifteen hours, as the case would be sometimes, it was no light task to sit down to jot down the incidents of the route, and the latest political intelligence. Then to snatch a sleep of three hours, hastily swallow a cup of sugarless tea and dry bread, and mount saddle again at five o'clock in the morning to undergo the same experience, could not be called picnicing.

One can perceive that an army of 5,000 men and a train of 10,000 animals, travelling along a footpath by single file, would necessarily occupy the day in journeying ten miles, even if nothing went wrong and no baggage was displaced. Then, if the steady marching of such an army and its baggage train would occupy a day, what must it be when there is an incessant halting to rearrange the packs of two or three hundred mules, which flounder and sprawl at every third step, upsetting everything?

The order of the march was similar to that followed in all expeditions. The reveille sounded at daybreak; the vanguard bestirred itself, and in half an hour would be *en route*, accompanied by an officer of the Quartermaster-General's department, who went ahead to select and mark out camps near the place designated as a station by Lieut.-Col. Phayre, in charge of the pioneers two days in advance.

The transport train was then drawn out before the respective regiments; the baggage was packed and slung on the mules, after

which it would form line along the road until the column should have passed.

By six o'clock all would be ready ; the military band struck up a merry tune ; the infantry, cavalry, artillery, naval brigade, the elephants, and the transport train would move on.

By noon the head of the column generally arrived at their new camp. Two hours afterwards the head of the baggage train appeared, and until midnight, and even next morning frequently, laggard animals would be arriving. Sometimes we were compelled to halt one day, that the animals might recruit their strength. When a short march of five or six miles was made—unless the road was very steep—the last of the baggage train would manage to reach camp before sunset.

At the end of every day's march the natives would begin to pour in with their supplies of grain and straw, meal, and bread. Visits of chiefs were made ; and on such occasions the General-in-Chief would hold a levée, whereat officers were expected to be present.

On steep paths the elephants toiled up laboriously with their ponderous burdens, and the other baggage animals invariably passed them ; but on moderately level roads these gigantic animals with their 1,800-pound loads were masters of the situation, and made excellent time. They were at once the terror and delight of the natives who crowded around them, who seemed never tired of watching their uncouth and unwieldy forms ascending or descending mountains. An ascent of 1,500 feet told seriously upon them, and their hard puffing and loud trumpeting were eloquent of their sufferings. They were invaluable on the campaign. They were fed with about thirty-five pounds of bread and forty pounds of straw or the coarse yellow grass of the country per diem. The majority of them were comparatively young, and stood the fatigue a great deal better than the old patriarchs.

Upon first arriving in camp, while the regimental cooks prepared the meal, the soldiers, after their ablutions, busied themselves in various ways. They were very fond of gymnastic exercises, and the camp at such periods presented a very curious and animating scene.

About sunset martial strains of music invariably burst forth from the military bands. For the first time the mountains echoed to the wondrous sounds ; and each native, leaning on his spear, wrapt in silence, would drink in, with pleasure and delight, the sounds which soothed his soul.

We left Antalo on March 14. Mesheck lay eight miles above Musgee. From the latter camp the road ran along a ravine

flanked by towering ranges of hills clothed with vegetation. Every kind of wild scenery was around us as we journeyed. On the conical hills blazed the bale-fires, to warn the wild master of Aleggie, who sat watchful on his knoll of strength, of our coming. Dark, suspicious faces looked down upon us from behind bristling palisades, eager for prey and plunder.

The people dwelling in hamlets on the lesser hills did not seem to have taken alarm at the overflow of pale-faced strangers, if we may judge by the look of the apparently enchanted village throngs who lined the slopes, dressed in their grotesque finery.

When within two miles of camp we were obliged to cross the meandering brook every few minutes because of its exceeding deviousness. The ravine, also, at this place widened into a valley of respectable width, wherein patches of corn were visible, interspersed with noble groves and low-lying meadow-land, studded with tussocks teeming with flowers in blossom. The mountains still towered higher, fully 1,500 feet above us, on each side. Their rugged sides were hung with an abundance of tamarisk trees, now and then varied with a clump of euphorbia or fir. Immense boulders at times projected boldly above the tree tops, and numerous ravines cleft the slopes.

After travelling eight miles the camp was seen beyond, and at the extremity of a noble avenue of trees. It was called Mesheck, from a fortified village of that name which crowned a hill hard by. It was a picturesque spot, like a small park, begirt with high mountains. A running stream, a level lawn, and patriarchal sycamores, were its principal features.

The 1st Brigade arrived at it on the 15th, while the 2nd Brigade rested at Musgee, and did not arrive at Mesheck until the following day.

The next march was that to Atzala, past the robber roosts on Amba¹ Aleggie, inhabited by the vulpine Welda Yassous, *alias* Welda son of Jacob. In the beehive dwellings on the hills were some 1,000 stout-armed spearmen and 500 musketeers. The capital of Woggerat, in which province we were now travelling, was a mass of grey granite and limestone, crowned by an elliptic cone several hundred feet high ; each side of it rose to a perpendicular height of 100 feet above the spine of the mountain on which it rested. The base of the peak covered an area of perhaps 200 square yards. Halfway up was a ledge or terrace on which the dwellings of the garrison were built, appearing at such an altitude like eyries.

¹ Amba is a native term for Mount.

Through a field-glass several swart faces could be detected glowering upon us as we passed. It is supposed that the chief, Welda Yassous, himself looked down from behind some friendly coverture, though some said that he had deported himself away from his home, being suspicious of some sinister design on Napier's part in passing directly by the base of his fortress.

For the first six miles the road led through forest shades and quaking quagmire, by mantling stream and by patches of cultivated land that lay within the valley. Then suddenly it inclined upward, and a long pull of two miles up the slope of the amba already mentioned was gotten over before we finally surmounted the spire of the ridge directly underneath the mount, which was fully 1,500 feet above our camp at Mesheck.

From this high eminence we could discover our new camp at Atzala, situated on an oval-shaped plain, 2,500 feet below us.

Without climbing the opposite heights, which appeared to be of equal altitude with that of the amba, further progress from that valley seemed to be impossible.

The prospect of the morrow's march could not therefore be very captivating. Captain J. Sidney had reported 'One hundred and sixty-six animals belonging to the Abyssinian Transport Train died on the last march from Mesheck to Atzala!'

The last of the transport train did not arrive until next morning after that fatal march. One or two 'specials' passed the night on the top of the hill.

'Welda,' son of Jacob, who kept his airy lodgings on the lofty amba of Aleggie, at an altitude of 10,000 feet above the level of the sea, after much coaxing condescended to come down and visit the General in state, surrounded by three hundred musketeers, who travelled to head-quarters as if they were imbued with the idea that they were just as good as any of the English soldiers.

Welda sauntered into Sir Robert's marquee in true lordly style, and sat on a camp-stool in a dignified manner.

He was accompanied by his brother, who looked a worthy scion of the same parent—a frizzly-haired, restless, rat-eyed, high cheek-boned, thin-lipped rascal.

Welda himself was an intelligent looking man enough, of medium height, robust form, muscular limbs, and not of a bad countenance by any means. But his conduct betrayed his huge pride. His love of state and barbarous magnificence was indicated by the golden armlets which he wore, and the collar of silver filigree work around his neck; in the splendour of his shield, draped with the lion's mane; and the circumstance of state with which he had surrounded himself. His musketeers

were armed with the Portuguese fusils of the sixteenth century, and double-barrelled shot-guns.

A long conference then ensued. Welda promised to allow his people to sell provisions to the army ; and the Commander-in-Chief presented him with a double-barrelled gun with ball and caps ; besides thirty new dollars for himself and twenty for his brother. When questioned about Theodore, Welda said at last that he did not think Theodore would fight ; but Welda's brother, having received the presents, spoke differently. He said, 'I shall now advise you differently from what my brother Welda said just now. Todoros will fight, fight as long as he has breath in his body ; he is cunning as a fox, quick-sighted as a lynx, brave as a lion. He will sweep down upon you in the dead of night. Beware of him ; he never shuts his eyes, neither does he dream.'

Napier. 'Your brother Welda said that he would not fight.'

Welda. 'I said it only to try you. It is the custom before we open our hearts to strangers. My brother has said well. Todoros is brave ; he will meet you ; he will not run away. Beware of him in the night before the mist vanishes, or dawn of day.'

Napier. 'I am obliged to you. But come with me and you shall see our elephants and big guns.'

They went out together, and the elephants, in obedience to the mahouts, performed many manœuvres, such as lying down, kneeling, trumpeting, and charging, which amazed the two chiefs greatly. The military bands played, and the 33rd Regiment performed many evolutions for their benefit. Two chargers were then brought up and presented one to each of the brothers, after which they departed to their amba, protesting their sincere friendship. They were preceded by their own martial band blowing through cow-horns, playing on pandean-pipes and flutes, and twanging three-stringed guitars. Their presents to Sir Robert consisted of two shields, two fine spears, pots of honey, and two dozen oxen.

Mukhan, the next position to Atzala, and distant from it sixteen miles, was occupied on March 16 by the 1st Brigade.

As Amba Aleggie towered upward to a height of 10,000 feet above the level of the sea, and as the valley of Atzala was 2,500 feet below the summit of the amba, the camp at Atzala was then just 7,500 feet above the sea. The valley was about two miles broad, bounded on the opposite side by the range of Debra Musa, whose rugged sides looked formidable indeed, when we arrived at

the base, and scanned its height. It was much steeper than Amba Aleggie, and the road had therefore to be made to run in zigzag fashion before the army could attempt to scale it.

Within two hours after it had started the head of the column appeared upon the brow of the mountain, and below them on the southern side (for we were marching due south) another plain, but infinitely larger and still deeper than Atzala valley.

Half-way downward we passed the village of Pilago, and directly above the village appeared one of the most extraordinary natural formations I ever saw. It was a polygonal-shaped mountain, upright on each side nearly 1,000 feet, the summit of which covered an area of three square miles. It was named by the natives Mount Debar, and it appeared to be of equal height with that of Amba Aleggie. Why Theodore should have neglected such an impregnable position was a question only to be answered by the supposition that Magdala was still more impregnable.

After reaching the plain on the southern side of Debra Musa, and on the left of Mount Debar, we crossed a stream, and our route lay over undulating ground covered with luxuriant grass. Gradually we left the open plain and travelled through avenues of shrubbery. Again and again the scene changed to a more or less wildly romantic one, past amphitheatres, through sylvan groves, over tiny jewelled rivulets, across open fields, downward through dells embosomed by tall firs and oaks, and up to the broad sunlight again. Refreshingly picturesque ravines and nullahs, teeming with undergrowth, were passed until we had journeyed sixteen miles, when the camp of Mukhan appeared upon an open ground, just as day deepened into twilight.

CHAPTER VIII

ABYSSINIAN SCENERY—LAKE ASHANGI IN THE LAP OF THE MOUNTAINS—
A HOPEFUL HEIR-APPARENT—OUR GROG IS STOPPED.

As might be expected, after such a long march, the troops were obliged to halt at Mukhan the following day.

The district around the new camp was a very populous one, and the natives came pouring in in great numbers to see the strangers, bringing with them at the same time various commodities to sell. The people hereabouts were slightly paler in com-

plexion than the Tigreans and the inhabitants of Attigratt. They were more muscularly formed and of a wilder appearance than any we had yet seen.

Presently there appeared three turbaned Mussulmen from the Galla lands, blowing upon prodigiously long cow-horns. They were avant-couriers of a Galla chief, who came in the name of his people to offer peace and friendship to the British Negus, Sir Robert Napier, which I need not say was gratefully accepted by the 'old man,' who reciprocated the goodwill of the Galla chief and bestowed upon him pecuniary rewards for his friendly promises.

Antelopes, hares, and other varieties of game were abundant around Mukhan, and several English officers enjoyed the sport. Some one shot a wild elephant in the neighbourhood, and left the huge carcass where it fell to sicken the country. There were some graphic accounts rendered of successful hunts, and every one had a trophy or two of the chase.

On the morning of the 18th the army broke camp and marched for Lake Ashangi.

For the first six miles our route lay across an undulating country until we came to the base of Mount Mosobo, where shortly overlapping ranges enclosed us as we laboured up. It was a region like unto what I have seen travelling afoot through the southern Pyrenees—a region of tropical beauty, opposite in character to any we had as yet beheld in Abyssinia. Upward we toiled, around the base of successive slants which were covered with tall pineries.

After four miles of an ascent we emerged out of the shade of the forest, and saw the sky above us, and another slight acclivity clothed with myrtle and sweet-briar; soon after we stood upon the topmost height of Mount Mosobo, and beneath us 3,000 feet lay Lake Ashangi.

An army cannot stand long idly looking down upon scenery; and so, though we all should have dearly loved to have lingered upon Mount Mosobo, to enjoy the tropic beauty of the scene, troops upon troops swarmed around us and bore us along in their irresistible current.

Soon began a series of windings. Round and round, feeling our way by the side of walls of gneiss, over bridle paths running along giddy precipices, until at last we arrived upon the plain of Ashangi.

We camped close to the lake on a park-like plain, after our march of fourteen miles. The nature of the route prevented an early arrival of the baggage trains. In the meantime the smooth

placid water tempted us to plunge in and cool our bodies after the fatigues of the journey. There were not the slightest indications of any hippopotami ever having been there, or of any other animal more ferocious than man.

The surface of the lake showed countless wagtails, ducks and wild geese, and the shores teemed with horn-bills, herons, ibis, snipe, pelicans and toucans.

Across on the Galla side of the lake there were plenty of antelope in the abundant woods, and panthers, hyæna and jackal.

Several specimens of petrified wood were found along the eastern shore of the lake. The northern side of it, a little to the east of where our camp was situated, and covering an area of nearly five miles, was a most treacherous piece of ground. It was one vast quagmire.¹ My Arab horse sank to his middle before I was aware of the treacherous nature of the ground, and a wide circuit had to be made before I was enabled to reach camp. The circumference of the lake was about ten miles.

It was fully midnight before the last of the transport train arrived at camp; my baggage, unfortunately, was one of the hindmost, and I had therefore to wait about ten hours before my tent was pitched.

The next day we were obliged to halt; the animals were unable to travel. Our forage was giving out, and a fresh supply had to be procured before we could move. The rations were therefore reduced one half.

About midnight an envoy arrived from the paramount chief-tain, spiritual and temporal, of the nomadic Mussulman tribes in the immediate district of Ashangi.

He bore a letter to Sir Robert Napier, wherein, after the usual circumlocutory address and good wishes—a peculiar custom of the country—the chief stated his desire to have peace with the Feringhees, and he asserted his theological opinion, how that the Old, the New Testament, and the Koran were part and parcel of the religious belief held in common between us Christians and themselves Mussulmen; he also promised to remember us in his prayers; commended us to the care and watchfulness of Allah, and warned us to watch carefully against our enemies, as they were many and strong. In accordance with the custom of his country he sent presents in the shape of one pot of honey,

¹ There is a tradition among the natives, that three hundred Galla horsemen in the heat of a charge upon the Abyssinians were caught in this quagmire, that they sank quickly out of sight, and not one of them escaped.

equivalent in value to a silver dollar. Sir Robert, having read this effusion of the Galla chief, presented the envoy with robes.

In the afternoon another Galla chief, accompanied by warriors carrying headless lances in token of amity and goodwill to the army, arrived at the camp. This personage was a perfect specimen of a coloured 'John Bull.' He also stated his wish to be on amicable terms with our Negus, and he in like manner was treated with deference.

Towards evening a different scene was enacted. A native—a Galla—was detected pilfering, and he was forthwith dragged before the Provost-Marshal, Colonel Fraser, to be tried for theft. A great wow-wow was instantly created. His countrymen, who are exceedingly clannish, hastened to surround him, and endeavoured to bear him off. One young man, supposed to be his brother, made a great outcry. The culprit had his arms pinioned behind him, and the formula of a drum-head court-martial was gone through. Colonel Fraser wished to give him three dozen on his bare back. Captain Speedy, hurrying there from a durbar, suggested that it would be better to permit him to be tried by a jury of his own countrymen. Fraser demurred, arguing for the force of example; Speedy maintained his suggestions on the ground that peace had just been made with their chief, and that it would be highly derogatory to it, and impolitic, to be too harsh at the offset.

'But what am I to do?' urged Fraser.

'Let his countrymen decide; they will punish him worse than you will,' said Speedy.

'Very well then, let it be as you say,' replied the Provost-Marshal. Accordingly, a jury of the culprit's countrymen was convened, and at it they went, arguing and speaking with great fervour and action.

The gist of the address of a grey-bearded elder was that nobody could prove that the man meant to steal it, and that he might have taken it in his hands merely to look at it. 'Is that a crime?' he enquired. 'Yet,' he added, 'must we punish him, lest the Feringhees say "Ah! these people will not punish their countrymen; our trust in them has been misplaced." Therefore I adjudge him to receive six blows with a stick, and to pay one-fourth of the article he intended to steal.' The mild sentence was carried out, to the great disgust of certain martinets.

On the 20th the army occupied a plain, which was but a continuation of the low land around Lake Ashangi, near Muzzageeta, at a point seven miles from our camp on the northern side of the lake.

From this place the army journeyed to Lat, a distance of eleven miles.

To avoid repetition, let me say at once that the profile of the route bears a certain resemblance, on account of the many hills we passed (to use a low comparison, but yet a very apt one), to the teeth of a saw, or a succession of traverses, or marching up and down a line of inverted stalactites.

To those mounted upon ambling nags the journey was not so very bad, but to those travelling on foot, with fifty or sixty pounds of a load, it was indescribable torment; more comfortable to imagine such a thing than to experience it. The heat was intense; that means that it was on an average of 98° Fahrenheit. From Zoulla to Lat during the day it had never been less than 84°; at night there was often a decline of from 30° to 40°.

It was a great relief to cavalry men and foot soldiers, after surmounting a mountain top which had tasked their energies to reach during three or four hours, to breathe the pure air of the upper regions, and to rest for a while.

No sooner had we planted our tents on a terrace of ground, than the threatened 'order' of the Adjutant-General, Colonel Thesiger, relative to the abandonment of rum—vulgarised 'grog'—with a codiciliary 'order,' was issued which announced the intention of the Commander-in-Chief to abandon his tents and baggage at Lat, and decreeing that twenty men should be apportioned to each tent, and twelve officers should batch together.

The order was a second edition of the one issued at Antalo, except that it was more peremptory in its tone. Sir Robert Napier was aware the first one had been evaded by the officers. Moreover, no baggage was to be permitted to go to the front. Every mule being required to convey commissariat stores, unmounted officers were to be allowed to carry only a greatcoat, blanket, and an indiarubber sheet.

Staff officers and état-major of cavalry could take what they pleased on their chargers, but then—as Sir Robert Napier suggested—'When sent upon duty requiring speed they must make no complaints to him of their horses being wearied out.'

With such an understanding they might take their tent and baggage along. Sugar, rum, coffee, tea, potatoes, onions, and such luxuries must also be left behind, as 'a forced march is to be made upon Magdala!'

The next morning, with a slightly diminished train and a singular paucity of tents and baggage, we broke camp, and started

for Marowar, stated to be ten miles, according to Colonel Phayre, who said he had measured it. It turned out to be more than eighteen. The soldiers, muleteers, and animals fell down by scores out of sheer exhaustion.

Towards the latter part of the march we passed several picturesque ravines, through all of which meandered streams, where the tired people rested, almost despairing of ever being able to make camp.

At five o'clock in the evening only the skeleton of an army had arrived at camp. A thousand men dashing from behind the hills would have annihilated the whole force by attacking them in detail as they came straggling along in weary groups. It was midnight when the soldiers finally reached their new rendezvous at Dildee. The baggage trains did not come in until ten o'clock next morning, thoroughly worn out with hunger and travelling.

As a consequence of the protracted march, we were obliged to halt again for one day at Dildee, the army sadly in need of it.

In the morning soldiers of the 33rd Regiment of Foot were drawn up before Sir Robert Napier, who reproached them for their conduct—saying that they were a disgrace to the army of Abyssinia; that he had heard through officers' reports of their murmurings and grumblings on the last march, and that since they had been pleased to conduct themselves in such unseemly manner he could not permit them to have the honour of being the Advance of the column, and he would therefore reduce them to Rear-Guard under Sir Charles Staveley, and the 4th 'King's Own' should replace them. Anyone would have pitied them, as they stood unmoved, though with hearts almost bursting with sorrow, listening to their General's reproaches.

The 33rd Regiment is one of the finest bodies of men in the British army, and it was a great blow to its reputation to be thus summarily disgraced. But even the Duke of Wellington, who formerly belonged to it, had occasion in the Peninsular campaigns to punish this regiment on account of the reckless spirits in it.

The camp at Dildee was a beautiful and picturesque spot. It was in a narrow valley enclosed between two high hills covered with wood, through which ran a small river—the Mya, which seemed like a river of Eden to us after yesterday's fatigues. It was the first real river we had seen in Abyssinia. It had worn itself a channel deep into the earth, and its banks were from fifty to two hundred feet in upright height. These banks were clothed luxuriantly with vegetation.

General Field, in command of the pioneer force, had waited two days for our arrival at Dildee. The day we rested at this

last camp he moved on with Quartermaster-General Phayre to the next rendezvous, which was said to be a place called Wandach, so as to be one day ahead of the 1st Brigade.

The next morning the army continued its march along the slope of a mountain called Mezgar Amba. It ascended in a consecutive succession of ridges, until we were led to believe that there was actually no end to its height.

About midday we surmounted Mezgar Amba, which rose 10,700 feet above the sea. The change of temperature from summer heat to subarctic cold was experienced at this high altitude. The cold drizzly sleet and rain, and gusts of icy wind, made us shiver in our summer linen. Those who by a wise foresight had provided themselves with wood while in Dildee Valley, and had secured it in their tents during the rain-storm, immediately had hosts of friends who warmed themselves by the friendly fire-blaze, and allowed their hearts to expand with love for the owner of the camp-fire.

The slopes of the hills were bare of wood. The only kind of shrubs, or plants bearing any resemblance to wood, were several green palmated-leaf trees, which could never be used for firewood unless well baked first. The natives were asked to bring firewood to the Commissary ; and in about an hour, directly after sunset, a bevy of ungirdled damsels, bearing on their heads huge loads of wood, arrived at the camp. Late in the night the 4th 'King's Own' reached camp to replace the 33rd.

About ten o'clock the army struck camp, and still following the slanting declivity of Mezgar Amba, marched to Muja, a distance of six miles. The road ran over the same slope, gradually descending, above the Takazze, or the Blue Nile. On the left of the road the Takazze flowed, of course, only a small stream at its source, but a hundred miles to the westward it was a considerable river.

The camp of Muja was situated between the Takazze and another deep ravine whose precipitous banks prevented us from getting any very large supply of water.

From Muja we travelled next morning to Santarai, a camp named after a village which crowned one of the grassy hummocks on the Wadela plateau.

It was one of the brightest days of the spring time in Abyssinia. For the first seven miles the route led over the continuation of the slope of Mezgar Amba, gradually descending to the Takazze. A most gradual descent it was, as may be imagined from the fact of the slope extending over a distance of fourteen miles. After travelling fourteen miles from the summit of

Mezgar Amba, or seven miles from the camp at Muja, the Takazze suddenly made a bold curve:

Upon arriving at the river, we found we were hemmed in unless we retreated backward from whence we came, or followed the zigzag windings of the Blue Nile.

'We neither intend to go back nor follow the Takazze,' said Captain Speedy; 'but we intend to scale that apparently interminable wall you see before you!'

'Great Cæsar!'

In truth most men would have uttered the same exclamation, upon seeing the long walls of granite.

But already the 4th Foot are half-way up the walls, serpentine at right angles to each other, and going round and round the windings. The staff is also determined to try it, and we spurring our horses tug up the slope. A short half-hour, and we have surmounted the first terrace. A gradual acclivity is in our front for three or four hundred yards, and another terrace of equal height and formation is to be scaled, and having accomplished this we stop to breathe, and get a glimpse at the bewildering variety of nature.

The higher we ascend the grander the scene! Under a sky blue (as that of Italy) spreads a plateau of the wildest land, 11,000 feet above the sea level, undulating as far as vision of man can reach, bereft of the least signs of shrub.

Having fairly reached the top of the Wadela plateau, Colonel Cameron requested of his regiment, the 4th Foot, to give three cheers, saying that it was a worthier feat to have marched up this height of 3,000 feet than to have conquered Theodore; but the men, though willing, were too much wearied to give more than a feeble response, and, from the state of their feet, it was cruelty to prevent them from lying down the moment they arrived upon the soft sward of the plateau. Far into the night the brow of Wadela, at the entrance of the exit from the Pass, was covered with the forms of tired men.

Two miles from the edge of the plateau our camp was pitched, near the village of Santarai, just twelve miles distant from Muja.

At the camp of Santarai, within an amphitheatre of gentle hills, there was not a particle of wood to be procured, as the whole plateau of Wadela, a hundred miles in circumference, has not above two or three dozen trees upon its surface.

But the dollar in Abyssinia is an omnipotent genius; it causes water to flow from solid rocks; it brings forth food in abundance for 20,000 men and 60,000 animals; it makes the plains to overflow with goats and bleating kids; it causes the inhabitants to

pull down their houses, and give their rafters to the Commissariat Department, that the food which they had brought for the soldiers should also be cooked! This latter was the case in Santarai.

Two rafters—that might support a light roof—about ten feet long, were sold for a dollar. Those who had a sufficiency of dollars purchased as much as they needed; but one day's fuel cost a whole dollar. The rations were decreasing rapidly. Our animals were on half rations; very often on quarter.

Private gentlemen wishing to keep their animals in a saleable condition, were compelled to buy from natives such quantities of grain as were procurable. Then there were the servants, who required a dollar's worth of bread extra of the rations received from the Commissary. A quart of milk or a little honey would be another dollar; so that it may be safely concluded that our expenses, including Commissariat bills, since leaving Antalo, averaged seven dollars per diem. A bag of two hundred dollars seemed to last but a short time.

This high plateau of Wadela has seen stormy times. Very many times Theodore ravaged it when his power was in its zenith. It now belonged to Wagshum Gobazyé, and Dajaz Mashéshe, his uncle and commander-in-chief, the day we arrived at Santarai was making an expedition a few miles to the eastward with a force of 1,500 men to punish a rebellious village which had demurred paying the heavy taxes imposed upon them by the Prince of Lasta and Samén.

His arrival at the village to the eastward occurred while we were arriving at Santarai, and friendly messages were at once interchanged between the respective commanders-in-chief.

Munzinger, long since reported missing by rumour, is again in the land of the living, feasting upon Habesh¹ cabobs, and His Excellency's tej safe in a friendly camp. The French Consul has been playing the polite diplomat in a satisfactory way: he has won the heart of the suspicious Habesh General; and, in accordance with an invitation from Sir Robert Napier, Mashéshe promises to pay a visit on the morrow.

We, safely housed on the other hand in our camp, fare as well as might be expected with people suffering from half rations, no grog, and bad bread. The mountain air of Wadela is chilling, and acts like a refrigerator upon frames acclimated to the heat of the valleys. Hoar-frost crowned every slope and eminence on the morning following our arrival. By reason of our blankets

¹ Arabic term for Abyssinia.

left behind, we suffered very much from the sudden change of temperature, and six blankets were required before anything like comfort was obtained. These we were obliged to purchase from the natives at a dollar each.

The Quartermaster-General announced that we were but seven days' march from Magdala. At Lat it was only six days' march to Magdala, so now, after marching five days, we found we were seven according to Phayre ; but Charles Speedy, interpreter-in-chief, declared it as his opinion that we were twelve days, if we allowed margin days, to guard against accidents adverse to rapid travelling.

The intelligence and political departments busied themselves in feeing chiefs—in bribing them to good conduct ; the Commissariat were always busy in purchasing what was brought in.

Major Grant and Captain Moore were sent to Dildee because of some complications occurring there—nothing in themselves, but very evil unchecked.

Colonel Merewether, political officer, obtained permission, or rather was commanded, to satisfy Welda Yassous, who in spite of his earnest promises and solemn covenant with Napier, ratified by breaking of bread and eating of salt, had departed from the straight path, and ever since our absence had been diverging wider and further from his plighted faith, until he had broken out into downright hostility.

It was even said that the couriers of Sir Robert Napier had been captured and ill-treated ; that if they made stout determined resistance, they were emasculated. The brothers Yassous had peremptorily forbidden their people from selling their provisions, and had prohibited country people with provender to sell, from passing through their territory of Woggerat, between Mesheck and Atzala.

Since Sir Robert Napier had determined to trust to natives for the daily subsistence of his troops and immense trains, such checks and hindrances were replete with serious consequences to the advance columns. Harsh treatment of every petty chief would not avail us ; rather the reverse. Each Ras on his own peaky amba imagined himself as good as the next one, or the Wagshum, or the Prince of Tigre.

On the second day of our stay at Santarai, at eleven of the forenoon, the pickets, shivering amid the drizzle and mist of a foggy morning, discovered an armed body of men approaching from the westward, and at once fired their muskets to signal the camp. Busy rumour immediately announced it as the approach of Theodore with 50,000 men !

At the first signal of the picket, Colonel Fraser, then officer of the day, galloped up to the outposts and scanned the strangers closely, after which he ordered the outposts not to fire, as they were friends who were approaching. At head-quarters it had been known since the previous evening that these strangers, who were no other than the troops under Dajaz Mashsha, Commander-in-chief of Wagshum Gobazye's army, were to come into camp on the morrow to pay a visit to Sir Robert Napier; for Munzinger, the envoy, had sent several couriers to inform Sir Robert of Mashsha's intention.

When therefore the vedettes of the Scinde horse and infantry pickets had fired their guns to warn the camp, the infantry had thrown themselves forward, in skirmishing order, and were advancing upon the supposed enemy; and had not Colonel Fraser arrived at the most opportune moment, the consequences would not only have been disastrous to the native cavalry, who were marching with careless confidence towards the friendly camp, but it would have arrayed against the English Wagshum Gobazye and his army of 40,000 men, who, believing that he had been treacherously dealt with, would no doubt have eagerly sought alliance with Theodore to avenge the murder of his men. The British army would then have had Theodore, with his 30,000 men in front, and Wagshum Gobazye, with 40,000 men, in flank and rear.

When it was known at head-quarters that the Abyssinian General-in-chief was coming, the various regiments were called to quarters. The soldiers put on their cleanest coverings for their sun helmets and white cotton gloves. The 3rd Light Cavalry advanced towards Sir Robert's tent, turned, and faced about to front. They were all in spick and span silvered uniforms. Their officers, mounted on their finest chargers, drew near, and, selecting a small troop of the cavalry to accompany them, at the word of command dashed off to meet Mashsha. In the meantime four regiments under arms were marched up to the western extremity of the camp, where they were drawn up in lines. All looked expectant to the summits of the bluffs on our left, for from that direction they were to come.

At the end of about half an hour a long line of cavalry crested the ridge. After a pause, during which it may be supposed that they examined the strange camp below, with its thousands of men and animals, the whole of the cavalry marched down the steep sides of the bluff as coolly and as deliberately as if they were on a level plain. There was no appearance of commotion or jostling, though the precipitous faces of the elevation were uneven enough with rough boulders and toppling stones.

The appearance of Mashsha's force was very imposing, though the unevenness of the ground caused one end of the advancing line to be fifty feet below the other ; but it kept admirable order and ranks. As they reached the base of the bluffs they halted and formed column. The English officers and their body-guards surrounded the Abyssinian general ; and as he crossed a little stream which separated the camp ground from the heights, the artillery commenced thundering a salute which caused the native ponies to leap with affright.

The regiments presented arms to the native General, and, forming column, preceded in advance of the native army. The military bands struck up 'Garryowen,' which delighted the ears of the dusky soldiers with its martial strains. In this manner they marched up to where Napier's tent stood, when the English formed open square, through which Mashsha was conducted towards Sir Robert's marquee. The English General came to the door, and immediately both generals embraced each other.

General Mashsha was a medium-sized man, about five-and-thirty years old, with a kindly good-humoured face, full of lively intelligence. He was dressed in flowing silk. His vest and wide trousers were of richly-coloured silk brocade, a necklace of amber beads was around his neck, and an elegant torque made of filigree gold set with vari-coloured glass was worn round the head. He had just come from a successful expedition against the rebels in western Wadela, and wore the torque with a horn in the centre, as a sign that he was exalted on high. This wearing of the horn after victory is an allusion to the scriptural description of the horn of the righteous, and to the 'lifting up of the horn on high, while the wicked man speaketh with a stiff neck.'

The Abyssinian force numbered probably 800 mounted men. They were all fine stalwart natives, dressed uniformly in cotton robes, with a broad scarlet band around the hem. Gaudy bracelets were around their arms, necklaces of amber and beads about their necks, and anklets adorned their ankles. Each soldier carried a couple of spears and a shield of ox-hide, while about half of them were armed with matchlock muskets. Not one of the horses was shod.

It is not known what took place between the English and Abyssinian generals after they entered the tent.

The interview ended, Mashsha was presented with a horse and a double-barrelled gun, of which latter he seemed to be very proud, and the horse attracted the general admiration of the native soldiers.

Dajaz Mashsha had his shield borne by a young Adonis of high degree. The shield was similar to that owned by Prince Kussai.

From these people we were able to form some idea of the strength and power of the Emperor Theodore. If his troops were armed only a little better than Mashsha's, Magdala was certainly a place that would task the strength of the British force to capture it. There was reason to believe that they were, as Theodore was always victorious in combat with native chiefs and princes. All about Theodore was, however, involved in mystery. Whenever spies came into camp with reports of him, they were so exaggerated that it was impossible to arrive at the truth. The prisoners' letters were also exceedingly vague. In such a case there was nothing left for General Napier but to tramp onward, with the hope that before many days the whole problem would be solved.

On the evening of the same day General Sir Charles Staveley, with the 33rd Foot ; Punjaub Pioneers, six companies ; Twiss' Steel Battery ; a company of the 3rd Native Cavalry ; the Naval Brigade, in charge of the rockets ; another regiment of European Infantry, the 46th Foot ; the 3rd Dragoon Guards (Europeans), and the left wing of the Beloochees, arrived upon Wadela.

On the third morning after our arrival at Santarai, the 1st Brigade broke camp, and started for Gazoo, sixteen miles distant.

The whole surface of Wadela plateau resembled the same amount of land on the Illinois or Nebraska prairie, except that rocks protruded a little oftener above the soil and grass on the Abyssinian plain. Several fields of green wheat were passed, while adjacent to them were patches of vetches and teff ready for the sickle. Small villages rose here and there, surrounded by an abattis of wattled fencework. There was always a pleasant breeze, which, with solar topees on the head, obviated the effects of the extreme heat.

Capt. Speedy, our interpreter, was commanded by Sir Robert Napier to go to the different villages on the plain to buy grain and flour. Mr. Speedy proposed to me to accompany him, that I might see something of the people untainted by British dollars. I very gladly acquiesced in the proposal.

The first village Captain Speedy and I entered was Wota, on the left-hand side of the road over which the army travelled, and about three miles from it.

When the inhabitants saw us approach, two or three of the elders came forward and bowed themselves to the ground before

us. Speedy delivered his 'Dīdwal achoo,' which means 'Health to you,' or 'How are you,' the customary morning greeting of the people. They prostrated themselves with their hands to their heads three times, and Speedy salaamed likewise in true Ethiopian style.

By their gestures, I interpreted an invitation according to the Scriptural texts :

"Come, Sooltan,"¹ if now we have found favour in your sight ; pass not away, I pray ye, from your servants.²

'Turn in to us. Here is a pleasant shade under our village trees, "rest yourselves,"³ and we will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts ; after that ye shall pass on.'

My friend consented to the arrangement, saying at the same that it was all very pleasant.

We seated ourselves under a green kousso tree, and 'directly they set before' us bread, butter, and milk, and the hind quarter of a kid. They stood by us 'under the tree,' holding their robes before us, so that evil eyes should not rest upon us while we partook of their hospitality, and we 'did eat.' The milk was delicious, the bread was excellent, and the kid was rich and tender.

After the extempore meal had been despatched, damsels arrived, bringing their corn and flour for sale, while we spread our silver dollars before us in tempting array. The first quantity of flour we bought barely weighed six pounds, for which we paid one dollar, but from this minimum we gradually rose to the maximum of thirteen pounds for a dollar. The heaps of flour and grain became larger, slowly, until they formed a miniature illustration of the great pyramids of Ghizeh in Egypt. We also purchased goatskin bags, thongs, and mules.

Before we departed from Wota, Captain Speedy and I had 4,000 lbs. of flour, and 3,500 lbs. of grain. When we left we could hear blessings showered upon us by the kindly villagers.

From Wota we went to Mai-Ayni, where the extraordinary stature of Captain Speedy excited unusual attention and respect. When he moved among them, they all moved away precipitately from before him ; but, jocularly disposed, this son of Anak would swing one of the young men aloft with his powerful arms, just to show them what 'Basha Felecca' could do.

The Syndic at Mai-Ayni was a singular being. He had been suffering a long time from a disease, until now he seemed to be nothing more than a skeleton. He welcomed us with many salaams. Around him skipped and danced a dozen laughing girls. Merry youth sauntered out of the village at the sound of our

¹ My lord.

² Genesis xviii. 3

³ Genesis xviii. 4.

voices, leaning on each other's arm, like so many Davids and Jonathans. Such interesting tableaux vivants were not witnessed by me in Abyssinia before this day. Pitchers and jars full of rich cream were brought before us, and one young damsel, out of honour to me—so said Speedy—insisted on my drinking cream while she held her pitcher to my lips.

We managed to secure at this village 40 mules, 30 horses, 1,700 lbs. of flour, 3,000 lbs. of grain, 300 cakes, bread, 75 goat-skin mussucks, and about 100 fathoms of hide rope. Late in the evening we arrived at Gazoo, the camp of the English army.

From Gazoo the army moved on to Abdecoom, distant fifteen miles.

The aspect of the country was precisely similar to that between Gazoo and Santarai; if there was the slightest difference it was in being a little more level.

Accounts of starvation in store for us between Abdecoom and Magdala were rife. Theodore, it was said, had burnt the country throughout, and taken every pound of grain away, so that Napier's plans seemed to be destined to sudden misfortune. But then so very many unfounded stories had been in circulation that people would not place any great confidence in anything said in Abyssinia.

Still rations were scarce, our supplies had long since been devoured. For a week before we had had no coffee, sugar, potatoes, rum, vegetables, or ghee. We were living on the toughest of beef—one pound per day—sugarless tea, ten ounces of flour, four ounces of rice, and half an ounce of rock salt, while our servants got but half of the soldiers' rations. Our horses were living on eight pounds of grass and four pounds of barley grain, and mules on four pounds of grass and three pounds of grain. Ahead the prospect was still darker. Two days at the furthest would consume all our stores. If our Commissariat Department was not replenished daily, starvation would certainly ensue, unless we killed our animals. Yes, by that method we might be able to live a month, until further supplies could be brought from Antalo. The idea was, however, anything but pleasant.

From Abdecoom the army on the next day moved on to Sindhe; only three miles distant from the former. Sir Charles Staveley's second brigade reached that same evening Abdecoom: thus the two brigades were but three miles apart.

General Mashsha, uncle to Gobazy, in the afternoon called upon Sir Robert Napier. He was accompanied by about three hundred cavalry. He came to inform Sir Robert that he had

purchased 6,000 lbs. of flour and grain, and would send it to his camp directly.

It being late in the day, Mashsha proceeded to a village on an eminence not very far from camp, and quartered some of his men among the villagers. Leaving that village, he was proceeding with the remnant of his band to another about three miles north, when he accidentally came upon an outpost of General Staveley's camp, consisting of a corporal and four men of the 3rd Light Cavalry.

These soldiers did not know Mashsha ; it is doubtful whether they ever heard of him ; but greatly exercised in their minds by the many rumours they heard each day about the dash and enterprise of Theodore, they believed that this strange party approaching them was either the Emperor himself, or else one of his reconnoitring parties, and when they saw the cavalry advancing they shouted to warn them off. But with that obstinacy which, I believe, all sorts and conditions of men feel when thus warned peremptorily by sentries, they still advanced. This seemed to confirm them in their suspicions. The corporal ordered a picket to fire. The sentry's shot was instantly answered by two from Mashsha's party. The corporal ordered his men to discharge a volley at them, and then gave the word to charge. These five men charged upon nearly fifty Abyssinians, sword in hand. Mashsha perceiving the error, gave the order to retreat, but the pickets were upon the rearmost, cutting and stabbing away like heroes. They pursued the rest for some distance, and seeing that they could not overhaul them, the little outpost squad returned to their post, having killed two and wounded two others.

As might be expected, the noise of the firing caused great excitement among the respective camps of Napier and Staveley. The second brigade was instantly under arms and drawn up in line outside of their camp, while the 3rd Light Cavalry scoured the adjacent hills in pursuit. The 4th European Foot, and the Beloochees, were marched out of the camp of the 1st Brigade, to take post on an elevation that commanded a large surface of ground near it. Everyone believed for a short time that the firing had been between the pickets and the enemy.

Mr. Munzinger, the interpreter, sallied out, however, with a portion of the Scinde Horse, to enquire into it. The village, whither Mashsha and his men had fled for refuge, was fortified, and its walls were manned by an infuriated body of men, who believed that the Feringhees were treacherous people who had professed friendship for their chief that they might murder him,

and it was with some difficulty that they could be persuaded from firing upon the Scinde Horse.

After many expostulations on the part of Munzinger, Mashsha was induced to come to the gate to listen to him, and after a fund of logic had been exhausted, the mistake was forgiven by the Abyssinian chief. Three hundred dollars were given to the families of the deceased as blood-money, which satisfied them, as the dead men were no chiefs, and common peasants' lives are held but lightly in Ethiopia. The wounded were taken to the British hospital tent and tenderly cared for.

From Sindhe, the army marched the next day down the Jeddah ravine, and up again on to the summit of the opposite plateau of Dahonte Dalanta, which was also 11,000 feet above the level of the ocean.

From Sindhe was six miles to the edge of the ravine. A ravine is defined as a long, deep and narrow hollow. It is a good definition, but were I to describe the Jeddah as a long, deep and narrow hollow between two plateaus of equal height, few would understand the true depth and extent of the Jeddah ravine. Were I to say—as I must say—that this ravine that yawned beneath our feet as we stood on the extreme edge of Wadela was thirty miles long, 3,800 feet deep, and two miles across from Wadela to Dalanta, I should convey to the mind of the reader the true proportions of the Jeddah.

Two miles from the camp we left the grassy district, and an expanse of scorched plain lay in front of us—the handiwork of Theodore's soldiers. As we surmounted a gentle rolling ridge, a huge and gloomy wall of rocks looming up on the opposite side of Wadela was seen. On approaching the brow we discovered the remains of Theodore's camp. This was the Bet Hor, so often heard of in the newspapers, where his camp stood while the road down the deep Jeddah ravine was constructed.

Around the old camp was the desolation which invariably follows in the train of ruthless war. There were still to be seen the booths, or arboured branches interweaved with the yellow grass, which served as tents for the soldiers. The bleached bones of sheep and oxen covered the ground. Here and there were scattered pieces of the black native blankets; kneading troughs of wood; horn spoons and bottomless horn cups; head-rests for girls, and innumerable pieces of leathern aprons or loin-cloth. Here were remnants of quern stones, by which the camp women ground their corn; and broken Ethiopian distaffs strewed the whole place. A significant sign to us of the cruelty with which Theodore governed his people was a human arm in the last stages

of corruption, and a skull with a great hack across it, which was found in the very centre of the camp.

Upon arriving at the brow of the plateau, the road which Theodore had caused to be made through the solid rock opened before us, through which the head of the column at once passed. For the first hundred yards the declivity was very steep. We could perceive the marks of Theodore's drills in the rock throughout the whole length of this pass. It must have been tedious work to him, working as he did with imperfect tools, an enemy hovering about him, in the form of Wagshum Gobazye, and another one advancing upon him in his rear, in the shape of the British force. The natives say that he worked as hard as any of his men; that he was constantly riding about on a white mule, to observe his men while at work. Now he would encourage and praise, anon would he threaten; at times would he flog; and at another place he would order a man out to instant execution; then again he would dismount, and proceed to show what real earnest work could do. After five weeks' hard work, he had constructed from the height of the Wadela to the hollow of the Jeddah, and up to Dalanta plateau, a road 8 miles long and 30 feet wide. Over this road we travelled, from terrace to terrace, and down the side of ledges, which in some places were almost perpendicular, until we arrived at the bottom of the ravine. The bottom was covered with pebbles and round boulders. In deep hollows alone could be discovered any water.

About two P.M. the head of the column was once more put in motion, and it was almost piteous to watch the faces of the soldiers as they tugged manfully up, with a certain air of half despair and resignation depicted on their features. It is of no use to follow them up step by step; suffice it that they halted every fifty paces, and about four P.M. they surmounted the plateau of Dalanta.

From here we could trace the army baggage trains along the whole length of the ascent and descent, from Wadela downward and upward to Dalanta. We were slightly astonished to find that, though we had started from Sindhe camp as early as six o'clock in the morning, the last of the baggage train had not yet, at four o'clock in the afternoon, commenced the descent of Wadela. Those who had their baggage so far behind might at once make up their minds that they must pass the night without their tents, blankets, or suppers.

At six o'clock Ali came up, triumphant, with my baggage. Captain Sweeny had stopped him twice, but on the road so numerous were the mishaps that occurred that the Arab boy

brought his two animals clear of them and with hardly a pause, except to breathe.

Not one-half of the baggage trains arrived at our new camp on Dalanta that evening. When once night fell, those who were still toiling among the convoluting defiles became enwrapped in thick gloom, and each man had to make the best of what he could in the premises. They unstrapped the saddles, and dumping the packs down on the ground, they tied their mules or horses to some bush close by, threw themselves down under the shelter of a tree or shrub, and slept their fatigue off as best they might.

It was very late even next day before the over-strained transport train arrived upon Dalanta plateau. Animals had died by scores in the ravine.

Further movement for two or three days was impossible. There were no rations on hand. According to a commissary's report there were only 4,000 lbs. of grain! This amount divided amongst the 5,000 animals of the 1st Brigade would give each one about six and a half ounces of grain, after nearly thirty-six hours' fasting! Sir Charles Staveley's Brigade, with 5,000 more, was to come up this day, and there would be none left for it. Captain Speedy was therefore despatched with haste to see the Chief of Dahonte Dalanta, who had always refused Theodore supplies, and had been the most rebellious of all rebels, to inquire whether provisions could be bought. His mission was very successful. He returned with one hundred mules loaded with grain, which amounted to the gross weight of 10,000 lbs., and a promise from him of 100,000 lbs. on the following day.

This was indeed joyful news for a portion of country that was said to be ravaged by Theodore. The chief showed unmistakable enthusiasm for the British cause, and all hearts were elated. The next day, which was April 7, witnessed an abundance pouring in, of grain, flour, bread, honey, chickens, grass, chopped straw, oxen, and goats.

On the evening of April 7 the long-expected 45th Regiment and 3rd Dragoon Guards arrived at our camp upon Dalanta.

The army was now concentrated, and numbered over 5,500 fighting men. The quick march performed by these two bodies of men from Antalo to Dalanta showed what the two brigades could have done had they been divided into regiments on the route.

About ten o'clock on the morning of April 8 the Commander-in-Chief, accompanied by his staff and an escort of cavalry, proceeded to the southern side of Dalanta plateau to reconnoitre Magdala, which was plainly seen from the extreme height of the

plateau. He reported that he saw the tents of Theodore's army on a plain below Magdala, and many guns in position on the fortress. There were also many thousands of people seen moving about there, as well as smoke curling upwards from the camp fires.

Sir Robert called it a very strong place, stronger than any amba we had as yet seen, which confirmed everybody in his impression that the emperor would never have neglected the strong places we had passed on our road, had he not held a much stronger position. The great desideratum was satisfactorily answered. Theodore was in Magdala!

When Sir Robert came back from his reconnaissance, the Engineers were set to work to make escalading ladders and torpedoes, in readiness for an assault up the cliffs of their numerous strongholds.

Our minds were at ease. Plenty reigned in the camp. Theodore was known to be in his fortress. To-morrow we should see Magdala from our camp on the southern brow of Dalanta. All felt happy at the thought, and such merry laughter and ringing heartiness was never heard in Abyssinia as was heard in the English camp.

The rival bands of the different regiments played their most enlivening music. The Naval Brigade had invited the Punjaabee band. The members of it squatted themselves in two half-circles, between which the lively 'Jack Tars' tripped the light fantastic to the music.

The natives left the camp bazaar and their trading to gaze at the sailors, whom they could not understand, believing them to be part of a worship to their divinity.

By-and-by the music ceased, and all retired to their quarters. The last tap of the tattoo was sounded, lights were put out; but on that summer night who could sleep?

CHAPTER IX

POLITICAL INTELLIGENCE—MAGDALA—THE LAST ACT OF THE DRAMA—
THEODORE OPENS FIRE—CHARGE OF ABYSSINIANS—COLONEL PENN'S
LAST SALUTE—THE JACKALS AND HYÆNAS AT WORK.

BEFORE proceeding with the description of the march from the northern brow of Dalanta to its southern side, let us glance at the political tidings which have reached camp since leaving Antalo. The last news I have quoted is dated March 6, 1868.

March 16.—A letter came from Mr. Rassam, stating that Theodore had at last informed his soldiers of our coming, adding that the English were a nation of traders, and that although they could manufacture good guns, and could use them at a great distance, they were wanting in courage, and no match for Abyssinians in a hand-to-hand fight. He promised that his soldiers should defeat the English with great slaughter, and that all their rich treasure should be divided among them.

March 19.—We heard from Mr. Munzinger that he had arrived at Wagshum Gobazyé's camp, and had been received in a very gracious manner by that prince. He also stated that Gobazyé extended the hand of friendship to Sir Robert Napier; and that whatever he could do to forward his expedition, he had promised would be willingly done.

Theodore was at Bet Hor, working as hard as possible to get his guns across the Jeddah ravine. He had burnt the country and ravaged it round about. The chief of Dahonte Dalanta had also rebelled, and a few skirmishes had taken place between the emperor's forces and the men of Dalanta.

March 20.—Another despatch came. Theodore had arrived upon Dalanta plateau, and was marching on to Magdala.

March 29.—Colonel Phayre, with the Pioneer Force, despatched a note to General Sir Robert Napier, informing him of the capture of Munzinger by some of Theodore's scouts, and that Theodore himself was recrossing the Bechilo river, which lay between his fortress and Dalanta plateau, with the intention of fighting the English.

March 31.—Munzinger sent a note, written by his own hand, from Dajaz Mashasha's camp, that Gobazyé's General would visit Sir Robert Napier upon his arrival at Santarai. Theodore, it

was said, was still at Magdala ; had never recrossed the Bechilo since his arrival at his fortress.

April 4.—News came that the people of Dalanta had submitted to Theodore.

April 8.—Rassam sent a letter to Colonel W. L. Merewether, who had come up with the army again from his successful mission to Welda Yassous, saying : ‘Beware ! the emperor is moving. Be very careful ; he may attack you in the night. Deal leniently with him for our sakes. The least burst of temper that he may be in, may end our lives. Have you any good champagne and havannas in the camp ? Keep some for me, dear Colonel, by the time I am with you. God bless you.’

On the morning of April 9 both brigades moved from our camp above the Jeddah ravine to the southern extremity of the plateau overlooking Magdala. The plateau being but six miles across, and smooth and level as a billiard-table almost, we reached the southern brow of Dalanta in a couple of hours, and pitched our camps just half a mile from the road leading downward to the Bechilo.

From the edge of the plateau I look down directly below my feet and see a wall of sheer rock about fifty feet in depth, then a sloping terrace running forward a hundred feet or so, abruptly terminated by another precipice of a like depth, along the base of which winds a well-made road for a hundred yards, when it turns and descends another terrace, and so on from ledge to ledge it winds through its tortuous convolutions until the eyes rest on a river—the Bechilo, 4,000 feet below !

Across this turbid stream I see another road, whitened by travel, inclining up another ravine—the Aroje, for about five miles ; when it is lost from the view by a jutting abutment of a hill, until we find the road, fainter than before, ascending at a sharper incline, a high hill topped by a small plateau. From this plateau arises, apparently perpendicular to us, at eight or ten miles distance, a frowning mass of rocks, divided into two differently shaped mountains. The one to the right is Fahla ; the other is Selasse ; a low ridge connects them. Behind Selasse I am told is Magdala. The obtruding proportions of Selasse prevent us from seeing it. Move a mile leftward of where the camp is, and the massive outline of the royal fortress is distinctly seen. These triplescaped heights contain Theodore, his army, and the captives.

The Bechilo valley must be seen to be realised. Away to the right and left horizons of the sky trend indistinct and interminable groups of peaks, which have their numerous points buried in the blue sky. Mountains crossing mountains, hills set upon hills,

shoot upward, rising one above another. Ranges appear like vaporous masses in the dim far-away distance, aching the eyes in the attempt to define their extent and reach. From these giant heights decline the lesser heights, until they reach the bottom of the valley, in the centre of which rise isolated the colossal triple fortresses.

Night's shadows sink at last, and in the centre of the circle, environed as it is by the deep valley on all sides, and by the circumambient mountains, which recede from all points to a distance of ten miles, is dimly seen through the twilight the lofty head of Selasse, illumined by thousands of twinkling fires, and with all its precipitous escarpments made visible by the many fires ranged around it.

While standing on Dalanta, we almost imagined we could hear the sounds of revelry in which the enemy's host indulged. With a powerful night-glass fantastic figures could be made out, capering round the lights, and we could distinctly distinguish groups squatting around them, as if they were discussing the events which the morrow foreshadowed.

Breakfast was despatched early next morning, and at the sharp blare of a bugle the tents were struck. Colonel Phayre with his six companies of Bombay and Madras Sappers and Miners were sent forward long before daylight, to remove obstructions and remake the road where the late rains had destroyed it.

Another sudden startling blare was sounded, and the head of the 2nd Brigade commenced the long descent to the Bechilo.

The last act of the drama was about to be enacted ! In spite of the little blunders and impediments of the march from Zoulla to the Bechilo ; in spite of the mysterious warning conveyed to the Political Officer—Colonel Merewether—by a messenger from Rassam, the captive envoy, 'Beware ! the emperor is moving ;' in spite of the rumours of the sudden sweep down meditated by Theodore ; the army had survived the march, and the head of the column had actually started on the descent in full view of Selasse and Fahla, whereon Theodore stood, with his eye-glass, surveying the scene !

Sir Charles Staveley had fully recovered from his rheumatism, and led the 1st Brigade, which consisted of the 4th European Foot (King's Own), Colonel Cameron ; a company of the Royal Engineers, commanded by Major Pritchard ; two regiments of Native Indian Infantry—the Beloochees and 27th Punjaub Pioneers ; two companies 10th Native Indian Infantry. They were all dressed in their best uniforms, and presented a very gay and animated appearance.

The tactics and plans of the battle and the storming had been discussed till late on the previous evening, and all the heads of commands fully understood what was expected of them. England and Sir Robert Napier expected every man to do his duty! The programme seems to have been as follows :

Colonel Playre was to take his Sappers and Miners to repair roads and clear obstructions, to occupy and to hold the head of the Aroje ravine directly beneath Selasse.

General Sir Charles Staveley, commanding the division, was to march the 1st Brigade across the Bechilo river, then to make a *détour* to the right, march up a steep hill intervening, and occupy the little plateau below Fahla.

The 2nd Brigade, consisting of the celebrated Irish regiment, the 33rd, or the 'Duke of Wellington's Own,' 600 strong; the 45th Regiment Infantry (Europeans), 500 men; Colonel Penn's six-gun battery of Mountain Train Artillery, 100 men; the Naval Brigade in charge of the Rocket Battery, 100 men; the Armstrong Battery of six 12-pounders, two 8-inch mortars, manned by about 200 men, were to proceed up the Aroje Valley, the Mountain Train Artillery in advance, and endeavour to secure a small knoll and a narrow ridge directly under Selasse, at the distance of 1,500 yards to the left of the hill known as the objective point of General Snyder's (First) Brigade.

The after conduct of General Napier was to be ruled by circumstances. When he should arrive in camp he intended to write another appeal to Theodore to consider well his position, and the consequences of refusal to deliver up his captives safe and unharmed.

At ten o'clock in the morning we who stayed behind to eat at our leisure comfortable breakfasts, and smoke the very last of our cheroots, had our tents struck and rolled up. The last of the 1st Brigade had disappeared beyond the brow. The English Commander-in-Chief mounted his charger, the Staff sprang nimbly to saddle, the 'specials' *en masse* order their horses up, and, booted and spurred, mount also.

The 2nd Brigade, led by the Chief himself, followed by his brilliant well-dressed retinue, defiled down the slope.

Down, down, and still down the lengthy slope we descended, slipping, stumbling, sliding, amid dense clouds of dust. Round and round in a hundred convolutions an hour, from terrace to terrace, with a train of elephants, camels, mules, horses, asses, and camp followers, extending far away out of sight over the summit of Dalanta.

After two hours we found ourselves at the bottom of the

ravine close to the Bechilo—a river, muddy and swift, about fifty yards wide, and four feet deep. The head of Snyder's column had already forded the river, and was at that time debouching to the right. In a short half-hour it had crested the first hill.

The scene of confusion in and on both sides of the river was somewhat alarming. Three hundred men with a field-piece or two appearing suddenly above this arena of strife might have insured a decided victory, for that one day at least, against the crusaders. The soldiers still waiting for their turn to ford the Bechilo were resting on the ground, while the 2nd Brigade, following in the rear of General Napier, only added to the tumult. The animals of the Rocket Battery, and those conveying the Mountain Artillery of Penn's Company, plunged thirstily into the water, and when restrained, kicked and plunged, and made the confusion worse.

On arriving at the river, the 2nd Brigade were ordered to cross. They accordingly took off their shoes and stockings, rolled up their trousers, and walked boldly in, getting a very efficient wetting up to the midriff, which slightly diminished their ardour. After crossing they formed column again, and preceded by the Naval Brigade and Penn's Battery they marched slowly up the Aroje ravine, at the head of which it was supposed the Bombay and Madras Sappers and Miners, and the companies of Punjaub Pioneers, stood guard.

There were no outlying pickets or scouts posted on the flanking ranges of heights. Seemingly the English army feared no enemy lying in the rear of those frowning crests, that rose up on each side of the ravine like walls. This careless mood and bearing at this time were very noticeable.

Slowly the 1st and 2nd Brigades marched their respective ways along to radii, forming a V, the base of the figure being the embouchure to the ravine close to the river. The 1st Brigade was even then swarming over the brow of a steep hill. If all went well, both brigades were to join below Selasse and Fahla.

The Commander-in-Chief, Staff, and followers, lunched on the river banks. After resting an hour, they struck off to the right, joining Snyder's column, then labouring up the slope. At 2 P.M. both brigades arrived at the bases of their objective points, very much fatigued. There was still a tremendous mountain—whose slope was nearly a mile in length—to climb, before they could surmount their positions.

I was riding with Colonel Milward—the senior officer of the Artillery—in advance of the 2nd Brigade, marching up the Aroje

ravine, when I saw him beckon to Lieutenant Nolan of the Armstrong Battery, and heard him whisper to him to go forward, and ascertain whether there were any signs of the enemy in front. We were at that time three miles up the ravine, and had as yet seen or heard nothing from Colonel Phayre or his Pioneers, though he had reported to Sir Robert Napier that he held the 'head of the ravine.'

A dead silence brooded over the hills and narrow valley. An ambush might have been planted somewhere on our flanks. There were many available places where the enemy could have hidden and taken us at disadvantage. The hills, in the hands of a civilised force defended by modern engineering, would have rendered the ravine as fatal to a dense column as the Afghan passes were to the British forces. From the prominent points in front, in rear, and flanks, we might have been subjected to enfilade, slant, and reverse fires. In the way we were proceeding, it appeared to me we were going blindfold, and I suppose the idea struck Colonel Milward.

Lieutenant Nolan, after buckling his waist-belt tighter round his loins and preparing his sabre and pistols, spurred forward on his errand. I requested to be allowed to accompany him, which request Colonel Milward politely granted.

For another couple of miles we travelled along the ravine at a sharp pace, looking keenly to the right and left, until we arrived at the bottom of a hill which terminated the great ravine of Aroje, where a narrow tangled gorge deviated in an oblique direction to the left and beyond the eastern extremity of Selasse.

As the king's road ran up this jutting abutment of a hill, we spurred upward, Lieutenant Nolan taking the lead, pistols in hand. For a few hundred feet the rise of the slope was one foot in two, and it was with great difficulty we clambered up. Upon surmounting its summit we discerned Selasse looming up high and vast o'erhead in dangerous contiguity, if a few expert sharpshooters were on the watch above.

There appeared, singularly enough, no indications of an enemy on the heights. That there were inhabitants was obvious from the many columns of smoke observable; but why they permitted the strangers to mount the plain below them was a problem. Judging from their perpendicular escarpments, they appeared unscalable to us. Tough work we imagined was in store for the British army when they should attempt to storm Selasse and Fahla—those twin giants that guarded the entrance to Magdala—if they were in any way protected as they ought to be.

To our surprise we discovered a group of officers reposing on an open green sward, in full view and range of both hills. This group consisted of Colonel Phayre and a few young officers.

When Lieutenant Nolan arrived at the scene, I heard M'G——, 'the best *sabreur* in the army,' utter the opinion that he for one did not believe there was anyone in Magdala.

'By George, neither do I!' exclaimed another officer. 'Nor I,' was echoed round.

'Oh, pshaw!' said Colonel Phayre; 'even last night there came a messenger from Rassam bearing a letter reiterating his warning, and stating his belief that Theodore intended to fight.'

'But I have ridden up that road that you see there within pistol-shot of the summit, and don't you think,' expostulated warmly Captain M'G——, 'that if people were there, they would have fired upon us?'

'That proves nothing,' responded the sceptical Quartermaster-General. 'Theodore is cautious and sly as a fox. He was not going to sacrifice any good chance which he may think he has, for the sake of bagging a couple of men. He may have decided upon giving up the prisoners, and, of course, in that event he would not fire; and, stop! by Jove, there is the Chief and his Staff!'

Looking in the direction indicated by Colonel Phayre, we saw the Chief surveying with his field-glass the precipitous faces of Selasse and Fahla; and at the same time the head of Penn's Battery appeared in our rear, panting and breathless after their vigorous clamber up the slope of the steep mount which Nolan and myself had come up but a short time previous.

These two positions, intended to be occupied respectively by the two brigades, were connected with each other by an almost level ridge, along which ran the road constructed by the emperor on his march from the Bechilo to his fortress.

The site of the camp of the 2nd Brigade was the round summit of the hill at the termination of the Aroje; from it ran the road, undulating and dipping into slight hollows, until it reached the plateau directly at the base of Fahla, where it was protected by scant copses of underbrush and scrub oak, when it suddenly emerged again into view on the surface of the plateau.

This level ground was but a narrow neck connecting the base of Fahla with a group of hills with blunted tops, and was unevenly connected together by the débris which almost filled the different depressions that existed formerly between them, until now they represented but a series of undulations dotted with clumps of low bushes. This ground had been chosen by Sir Robert for the camp

of the 1st Brigade while viewing it eight miles off from the heights of Dalanta. It was a happy selection, protected as it was by the steep slopes in the rear, and commanding as it did all approaches to it while still well out of range of any artillery that the emperor might have upon Fahla. Ten 24-pounders (Armstrong's) mounted upon Selasse and Fahla would undoubtedly have rendered both positions completely untenable; but then Sir Robert was but measuring himself against an African potentate.

Scattered over the ground between the two positions were the remains of the emperor's old camp of wicker booths still standing, and broken native crockery lying about, with the filth and offal emitting a fearful smell.

Colonels Milward and Penn busied themselves in looking for the cleanest place to pitch the tents that were expected to appear during the night, and the Artillery sergeants followed them about, to measure the camp when selected. The two colonels then rode to the edge of the eminence nearest the fortress, and began to comment leisurely upon its appearance, and the probability of battle.

It was 3.30 P.M., my attention being called to that fact by hearing Colonel Penn utter the remark aloud after looking at his pocket chronometer.

'I wonder if that fellow Theodore intends to fight at all,' said Colonel Milward.

'Not he,' replied Colonel Penn, bluntly.

'There are men on top of the hill, sir!' exclaimed a sergeant, who had been examining the stupendous mountains with great interest.

'What?' bawled out Colonel Penn; 'ay, by Jove! I see them.'

'Egad, they line the whole summit from one end to the other!' said Colonel Milward, aroused now to activity.

'And by Jove,' added Penn, 'Theodore has opened the ball! See you the puff? D'ye hear the music of chain-shot?'

After two seconds of expectancy, 'boom!' came the loud report, and half a second later a huge chain-shot flew over our heads, burying itself fifty feet in our rear.

'They are coming down, sir!' roared the sharp-eyed sergeant.

'Where? Where? Ah! I see them,' responded each of the colonels.

'Bring up those guns, boys! Get ready for action!' shouted Colonel Penn, bounding towards his company, waving his sword and uttering various commands in true military style. 'Look smart, boys! Bear a hand quickly! Keep your eyes open, my lads!'

'Boom ! boom ! boom !' went three monstrous guns in quick succession from the most salient angle of Fahla, discharging 68-pound chain-shot over towards where stood Napier and his Staff. Again the huge cannon thundered, and announced to us below that he had ten guns at work in real earnest.

One more glance at the charging squadrons of the enemy told too plainly that there was no time to lose, if a reception à l'Anglaise were intended to be given them.

'Down with those guns !' commanded Colonel Penn, swinging his sabre ominously above some laggards' heads. 'Lead the mules to the rear. Man guns. Here, you sir ! what are you driving at ? Keep your wits bright, or by Jove I'll spur you to it.' A very prompt man was Colonel Penn, though he did use energetic language ; but what of that ? it was life and death with them all now. Over 3,500 of the enemy were galloping—animated by wild fury—down the hill.

At this crisis an aide-de camp arrived upon the scene, with instructions for the Naval Brigade, which had just come up, to hurry up to where Sir Robert Napier was.

Captain Fellowes of the Royal Navy, Commander of the frigate 'Octavia's' crew which formed the brigade, touched his hat upon hearing the order, and giving the word to his men, drew his sword, and led them at a quick pace to occupy the position designated. In a short time they emerged upon the crest of the plateau, whereon Sir Robert Napier stood surveying the advance of the enemy.

Following the route taken by the 1st Brigade from the Bechilo Valley, Sir Robert had overtaken Sir Charles Staveley, the divisional commander, with whom he entered into conversation, and in company they had continued their march up the consecutive gradines of the interminable slope. After an hour they had surmounted the eminence already mentioned, whence they obtained a good view of the extreme edges of both fortresses—Selasse and Fahla. Near this elevation the six companies of Sappers and Miners were found.

Immediately after his arrival upon the summit, General Staveley decided that, as the steepness of the road up which he had climbed presented so many obstacles to the rapid advance of the baggage trains of his column, it would be wise for them to take the more accessible route up the Aroje Valley, and with that order an aide-de-camp was despatched to the conductors and superintendents of the trains.

For a thorough conception of what these two fortresses represented, I must state that they appeared in the form of a line,

or an arc of a circle, with 3,000 yards for a radius. The centre of this line was a low gorge, with a depression of 100 feet between Fahla and Selasse, by which easy communication was maintained between the two fortresses. The salients of Selasse and Fahla were about 1,000 yards apart. That of Selasse commanded all approaches from the east and the Aroje Valley, and its fire was easily convergible upon the road which led up to the gorge that divided it from its counterpart Fahla. The salient point of Fahla commanded the western approaches, and the exposed summits of the undulating ground, upon which General Napier stood. The camp site of the 1st Brigade was distant 1,500 yards from Fahla, and 2,500 yards from Selasse. The rounded plateau whereon Penn's battery was posted was distant 900 yards from the most salient point of Selasse, and from Fahla 1,900 yards. So that if the two fortresses were defended by guns of modern construction, the sites chosen for the camps of the brigades would have been within range of the guns on the heights ; in fact, they could not be tenable for half a minute.

The prolongations of the natural lunar formation of the heights commanded so well the road leading to the intermediate gorge, that it would be simply an impossibility for an army, except at the risk of annihilation, to have marched up ; and on all other sides the slopes were almost perpendicular, so that, were the enemy but armed with rocks, barely one of a storming party could live to reach the summit. There were no prominent hills in the neighbourhood from which an efficient fire could be maintained by the assaulting column. A traverse, again, planted along the prolongation of the intermediate gorge, would have perfected one of the most defensible places in the world ; and a concentric fire would thus have been brought to bear upon the only entrance to Magdala.

About 3.30 P.M. two men were seen going from gun to gun on the salient of Fahla—the summit of which rose to the perpendicular height of 1,000 feet above the ground on which Napier and his Staff stood. It was supposed that they were loading them ; and a critical survey, made through a field-glass, verified the supposition. Still the group of English gentlemen did nothing but stare, even when they saw that six cannon which they had counted were being got ready.

Supposing a dash were made from the heights upon the group ! The 1st Brigade had not yet come up. The hills were very steep ; the soldiers were thirsty and tired.

Suppose an ambuscade among the underbrush on the slope to their right, which, indeed, was well adapted for such a purpose !

What would have become of the General-in-Chief, Sir Charles Staveley, General Milby, and their respective staffs?

For the body of the column was still half a mile behind, clambering, almost in despair, the rugged steeps!

The grove and underbrush had not been examined by anybody. No keen-eyed scouts had gone over the ground. Those numberless little gullies, covered with tangled bushes, had not been penetrated. The Sappers and Miners, fatigued with hard climbing, had, as soon as they reached the top of the plain below Fahla, thrown themselves on the ground to rest.

It was at this time the enemy were seen pouring down Fahla slope *en masse*; and a pearly wreath of smoke, a thundering report, and a chain-shot, shrieked the emperor's defiance! Theodore was in earnest!

'Away, you sir!' Sir Robert commanded in sharp tones; 'bring up the "King's Own" on the double quick; and you, sir,' to another aide-de-camp, 'order the Naval Brigade here instantly; and you, Sir Charles Staveley, let the Punjaubees deploy across the narrow plateau in front, but do not fire until the enemy are within two hundred yards of you.'

'Ah, is that you, Colonel Phayre?' Colonel Phayre had now come up from the hill at the head of Aroje. 'Have you examined those ravines?' Colonel Phayre responded indistinctly.

Nearer and nearer advanced the enemy, 3,500 strong, apparently confident of the issue. Their war songs came pealing towards us. We could see their cavalry caracoling and bounding joyously along; the foot soldiers leaping and brandishing long spears and swinging their black shields.

Horsemen and foot soldiers vied with each other. They flung their flowing symas, their bezans, and many flung their loin-cloths away, and with lances and shields in rest they bore down the hill, reached the plateau, and sped over it with their numbers. A clear open plain was before them, over which they rolled like a huge wave!

Sir Robert Napier sat on his charger impassible, surrounded by a group of men who were not nearly so unaffected as their chief. There was but a thin line of men; only six companies of Bombay and Madras Indians, armed with the ancient muzzle-loading Brown Bess. 'Rather dubious,' was everybody's internal comment. A crisis stared the General in the face!

Closer the Abyssinians drew, until we momentarily expected to see them launch their spears, and annihilate the Sappers and Miners.

‘Here it is, General ; the Naval Brigade has arrived !’ said a smartish aide-de-camp.

‘Very good,’ responded Napier ; ‘let Captain Fellowes take position on that little knoll in front.’

Not a minute too soon did the little band of sailors appear on the scene. Quick as lightning the sailors obeyed the well-known voice of their commander !

‘Action, Front !’ shouted the naval captain. ‘Action, Front !’ repeated the lieutenant and boatswain ; and hardly had the words died away from their lips before the sailors had unstrapped rocket tubes and carriages, and had them arrayed on the knolls ; muleteers in the rear with their animals ; rocket carriers with their ammunition ; rocket men ready with their pry poles.

‘Fire !’ and even in the act of launching their spears, a stream of fire darted along the enemy’s ranks, ploughing its fiery way through their swaying masses. Another, and another, rushed through them ; and cheer after cheer issued from the lips of the sailors and marines.

The battle had begun ! The cheers of the Naval Brigade were echoed fiercely behind ; and as the General turned his head, he saw the ‘King’s Own’ coming up on the double quick, with cartridge-boxes rattling on their hips, and men’s fingers manipulating cartridges, and fixing their Sniders for the strife as they ran.

When they first heard the loud boom of Theodore’s cannon, these soldiers were a mile to the rear, reclining on the slope—peevish and fretful—disposed to curse themselves and the world. But no sooner had the sound of cannon vibrated on their ears, than with a bound they sprang to their feet. An aide-de-camp galloped up and delivered his orders. The effect was magical ! In an instant of time they were on the double quick like hounds in full cry. There were only 300 of the ‘King’s Own’ together ; the others of the regiment were on duty as baggage guards.

The enemy, from very astonishment at the novel sound caused by the rockets, halted and cast inquiring glances at each other, as if to ask, ‘What manner of things are these ?’ but urged by their chiefs they made another desperate essay to advance.

A low ridge of ground rising but a few feet above the narrow plain, and a hollow, divided the enemy from the Rocket Battery. The Sappers and Miners had been withdrawn for the support of its flanks, and thus a clear space was kept for the rocket guns to do good execution, and incessantly they vomited their fiery darts at the enemy, now but fifty paces from the battery.

Without pause or hesitation the 'King's Own' kept on their way, forming line the while. Into the little hollow in front of the battery they shook themselves, with their arms. Into, and through the scrub oak, and underbrush, and in a second almost, the head of the 4th Foot crested the slope, and confronted the enemy, a few of whom were on the rise on the other side.

'Commence firing from both flanks!' rang out clear as a silver bell from Colonel Cameron; and instantaneously, two quick volleys of musketry were flashed in the faces of the dusky foe, and like a stream of fire volleys ran from side to side without a pause, raining such a storm of leaden hail, that for the second time the enemy halted from sheer astonishment. It was as if they were paralysed at the very moment they intended to launch out their spears, and one could almost fancy that these weapons vibrated in their hands from the impetus they were about to give them. Slowly they seemed to regain consciousness, and horrified, they gazed upon the awful result. Strangest sight was it to them, who had ever been victorious in the field of battle, to see their own men mowed down.

'Retreat!' cried the chiefs. The enemy did retreat, but not fast enough. They endeavoured to take vantage of boulders to escape the whizzing bullets; but the bullets found them out, and stretched the men behind dead upon the ground.

Here was one running for dear life for a copse; but suddenly you saw him leap into the air and fall on his face, clutching the ground savagely. Here was another one with head bent low, in the vain thought that if his head escaped he would be safe, making all haste to get into a hollow, out of reach of the leaden storm; but even as the haven dawned upon his frenzied eyes, a whirring pellet caught him, and sent him rolling down the incline. There was another one, just about to dodge behind a massive boulder, from where he could take slight revenge, but before he could ensconce himself, the unerring ball went crashing through his brain; and there was another one about to plunge in hot haste down a ravine to the left, who had his skull shattered by a rocket, and with a dull sound the body fell down the precipice.

Some chiefs there were who turned round to take a parting shot, and some who, not entirely panic-struck, strove to re-form the natives. They were partly successful, and under their leadership a thousand of them precipitated themselves down the steep sides of the narrow plain, and seemed determined to capture Penn's Battery, still isolated on their little knoll below Selasse.

Leaving the 'King's Own,' the Sappers and Miners, and the Rocket Battery, to work their will upon the few left on the plain, I took advantage of the lull of the skirmish to hasten down along the road towards gallant Colonel Penn, to see how that officer was prepared to meet the impetuous onset of the Abyssinians.

The guns of the Mountain Train Artillery were ranged in a semicircle, and when the enemy were within 500 yards of them, Colonel Penn smilingly gave the word to 'Fire!' A sharp yelp-like report, and six shells flew through the air, and directly burst among the advancing masses. Another astonished pause!

Here were other strange things for the Abyssinians. Music like that of distant harps; while missiles were tearing and rending men to pieces. Simultaneously the enemy, instead of advancing, turned their faces upward to listen to the novel music, and seek the solution of what was a dark enigma to them; and while they were halting and listening, they heard sharp cracks above their heads, and immediately afterwards a thousand pieces of iron were flying amongst them, laying whole groups of them level with the ground.

They ascertained at last that the horrible hubbub proceeded from the little knot of men on the knoll. 'Forward!' yelled a bull-hearted chief, Dajatch Deris, using his spear freely among the most craven. Coerced by gesture and example, they leaped downward like tigers, up and across knolls, and down again into a ravine choked with wild olive and tamarisk, until they were at the base of the hill whereon the battery was posted.

When first this demonstration on the part of the enemy was observed, the Punjaub Pioneers, who had come up soon after the first volleys were fired by the 'King's Own,' were ordered to its support, and just as the Abyssinians were coming up toward the battery, they show themselves to the enemy on each flank of the guns.

'Commence firing!' was the command; and again rattling volleys were discharged in the faces of the sorely harassed natives—who had almost made sure of capturing the cannon—dashing them backward, and downward into the bottom of the ravine. A moment's consultation was enough to convince them that here there was no hope. Against shell-vomiting cannon, and against a very wall of fire, discharging bullets by the hundred to their one, what could matchlocks effect? So, in spite of their chief, the Abyssinians retired precipitately, firing as they went, and, sad to relate, the poor Dajatch,¹ before he reached the bottom, felt a

¹ Dajatch is an Abyssinian term for General.

sharp twinge, and incontinently tripped and rolled helpless down the slope, with broken leg.

Round the base of the battery knoll the ravine ran, emptying itself a few hundred yards below into the Aroje. It was overgrown with tangled brake and dense jungle. Along this ravine the baffled enemy crawled.

'They are going after our baggage, sir,' said an expostulating voice.

'Ah, are they indeed? So they are!' said Colonel Penn after an examination.

'Right about! Left oblique! Forward, march!' were the sharp, firm, composed orders given at once, and understood. The Punjaubees went sweeping across the knoll in an oblique direction towards the brow overlooking the Aroje.

Up the Aroje were advancing long trains of baggage, ammunition, and commissariat stores, pell-mell, in confused masses and in straggling lines. Our involuntary thought at the sight was, 'What if Theodore had only 200 men with muskets in their hands, on some of those hills overlooking the Aroje Valley!'

Warned by the echoes, that the hills flung far and near, Captain Roberts, who was at the time commander of the baggage-guard, mustered a few companies of the 'Duke of Wellington's Own,' and two companies of the 4th Foot, and stationed them at the head of the valley, which—it was supposed a few hours previous—Colonel Phayre and his men were guarding. No sooner had they done so than a confused noise was heard a little above, and presently a large body of men issued out of a narrow gloomy gully; and as Captain Roberts said, 'By Jove!' the enemy was upon them.

'About face! fire!' and along the line of soldiers drawn across the Aroje ravine there ran a rattle of muskets, a clicking of triggers, and a roar of sharp musketry. Practised men were at work with the Snider rifle. The latest invented breech-loader was in expert hands—one could tell the difference by the mere sound; it was continuously rolling.

The Punjaubees came directly upon the scene, looking down from the summit of the knoll, with their dusty faces as dark as the Ethiops'. They saw the enemy, and again the dreadful word for slaughter was given—a word which will be remembered by Abyssinians, and handed down to their posterity!

Again and again the muskets boomed loudly on the ear, and there was sure 'Death in the front,' and 'certain Destruction in the rear!'

The English had caught the enemy where, had they known

anything about military science, the Abyssinians should have caught the English. The enemy dropped dead on all sides. Their experience here was worse than any they had undergone as yet. Had they stopped ten minutes longer, not a man would have been left alive to tell the tale of the grievous disaster that met them. Here, as elsewhere, they seemed to be too much astonished to fire in return. I did not hear a single Abyssinian musket fired; they seemed to wish to fight hand to hand, but the rapidity of the Sniders gave them no chance.

They wanted the baggage, it seems, but the Irishmen of the 33rd stood between, and the enemy gave way to the sentiment of dull despair. Some six hundred—all that seemed left of the thousand—turned swiftly about, when they found that no impression could be made. They dived back into the jungles whence they came; keen-eyed riflemen following them up—‘potting’ the fugitives unerringly.

The Punjaubees, swept to their old position near the battery, and deploying along the prolongation of the slope, calmly waited the flying foe to emerge from the bushes. Not long had they to wait; as the dark forms bounded out of the recesses, the Punjaubees commenced their withering fire upon them once more, descending the slope as they fired. The position in which the Abyssinians now found themselves was a perilous one indeed. It was an open hollow with clear slopes rising abruptly about a hundred feet from the bottom. On one side were the Punjaubees; 600 in number—up the opposite side some fifty paces across scrambled the Abyssinians, with the main desire now simply to get away as quickly as possible from the dangerous place. How easy to imagine the result of the unequal contest, where slope lined with cool riflemen fronted counter slope clear and open as a glacié!

The fight became a battue—a massacre! Down the slope rushed the Sepoys, with bayonets fixed to their guns, and fresher than the tired natives, they soon came up with them. Out of that very despair which the most craven heart feels when hard driven, they mustered new courage, and determinedly turned round at bay.

The fiery Sikhs came hand to hand with Ethiopian mountaineers, fierce as they. Now came the tug of a genuine contest! The Abyssinians launched their spears, drew their curved shotels, and charged down with loud cries. The Sikhs, undismayed, rushed up to meet them with their bayonets, and crossed weapons with them.

Two companies of the 10th Native Indian Infantry rushed

down from the battery knoll to the support of the Sikhs. No mercy was asked ; and dead men lay stark and stiff plentifully. But they were all Abyssinians ; very few of the Punjaubees were wounded.

After victory had declared itself in favour of the Punjaubees, and the poor remnants of Theodore's thousands were sullenly retiring from before them, I turned away to witness the action on the plain below Fahla, which had again burst forth as loudly as ever. I noticed that the sky had become suddenly overcast, and that there was every appearance of a tempest being at hand. As I reached the plain, the thunder rattled over the whole wide concave, the lightning lighted up ghastlily the upper world of rocks and mountains, and as it disappeared, left a deep gloom in the valley. Shortly the rain fell in torrents, and a gust of wind sent it pelting in our faces.

However, it was not for long ; the thunder of the heavens ceased, bright sunshine pierced the clouds, illumining for a short time the Bechilo Valley, until the gorgeous tints of the rainbow were revealed, when the sun came in his setting glory to take a parting look and dye with hues of gold the sad scenes visible in this rugged spot.

The 4th Foot during my absence had been reinforced by the Beloochees, 600 in number, and at the time I arrived upon the scene they were about to move closer to Fahla, as some of the enemy were ensconced behind some of the rocky projections of the slope, maintaining a scattering fire upon their ranks, and one or two had been wounded. When they had advanced to within 300 yards of the base of the fortress, they opened fire once more upon every suspicious rock and bush clump until they searched every foot of its vast surface.

Several of the enemy stood boldly forward and used their matchlocks and double-barrelled guns bravely, but to little purpose. Horses and riders were seen rolling down hill from the effects of the British fire. Of little avail were bamboo bushes, or tamarisk and kantuffa shrubs, to stay the searching bullet.

Three hundred Snider rifles, six hundred Enfields, and a dozen rocket guns plied with fearful rapidity, raked the whole length and breadth of the grim steep with their murderous fire ; even upon the very height of Fahla itself the rockets did considerable damage, destroying several of the cannoneers. Theodore narrowly escaped death from one of these missiles, as he was superintending the gunners on Fahla.

The Abyssinian musketry was prettily loud and brisk at this time, and was readily distinguishable.

Amid his gay Staff, Sir Robert Napier's snowy sun-jacket was seen. Riding near to the group, I found him bending over the pommel of his saddle encouraging the soldiers. His usual placid smile had returned. Taking up his field-glass, he noted carefully the most prominent points of interest—the obstinate native combatants still firing away from behind butments of rock and mounds of earth; Battery Hill and the numerous ravines that lay between the plain and it. The defeated enemy, sullenly retiring from before the Punjaubees, attracted his attention, and he saw groups of them still hesitating as if undecided whether to retreat up Fahla or make another attempt at the battery. Shutting his glass, he beckoned to him an aide-de-camp, and said, 'Ride over to Colonel Penn, and tell him to play his battery well upon those fellows below.'

Upon receipt of the order Colonel Penn directed his 'Steel Pens' (as they were facetiously termed) upon the enemy, and his little cannon quickly dissipated the last remnant of hope that the Abyssinians might have entertained of capturing his battery.

It was 5.30 P.M. Theodore's guns had ceased their fire; because, as he said, 'the English are not afraid of my chain-shot; they march up in spite of my big balls;' and because he could not depress his guns enough to bear upon the soldiers as they were directly under him, 1,000 feet below; besides he was so furious (so we learned subsequently) at the terrible overwhelming disaster that he met, that he could not reason or decide upon anything.

Quietness was restored as the twilight deepened. The death storm had lasted two hours. Slowly we returned to our camps, or rather where we intended to make our camps, to Battery Knoll, and the patch of table-land beyond the plain. We stumbled over the dead, who, lying stripped, were of the colour of the soil. Among the thickets the slain warriors, enrobed in their cotton togas, appeared like white splotches upon the dim and indistinct ground, and in crossing the sinuosities of the ground we were often startled by the spectral gleam of the linen and silken kirtles with which many of the dead were enwrapped.

We reached our positions and found that the tents had not come up; no provisions had arrived, save those belonging to the Staff. But the camp followers had arrived by hundreds, and were now creating an uproarious jabber. Hungry mules and horses were impatient for their rations of grain, and there was neither grain for animals nor provisions for men. The tired soldiers came and questioned one another eagerly about food. They were answered in the negative. They would have to wait

until midnight, they were told ; their tents would not come until morning.

About midnight most of the baggage was up, but the tents could not be pitched, and the only resource left for us was to bivouac close to the smoky and uncomfortable fires.

Sentries were posted plentifully around camp, and soldiers slept with their arms ready for immediate use.

Before rolling ourselves up in our rugs, and while thinking of the events that marked the day, our ears caught the sounds that betokened the presence of the beasts of prey, which had come to devour the abundant feast spread out by the ruthless hand of war.

Stranger lullaby than that which lulled us to sleep that night man never heard, and the last sounds our dulled ears caught were the jackal's whelp and the hyæna's bay.

CHAPTER X

CASUALTIES AFTER THE BATTLE—A WELL-DRESSED CAPTIVE—THEODORE IN DESPAIR—RASSAM—STRANGE RECEPTION OF THE CAPTIVES—THE FINAL SUMMONS TO SURRENDER

ABOVE the stormy field of yesterday the sun shone with its usual tropic warmth and brightness the morning after that fatal Good Friday, the 10th of April.

The clock-bird sang in the groves, the swallow chirped in the gladsome light, and the lark high in the diaphanous air of those high altitudes trilled the sweetest notes, which strikingly contrasted with the savage cries that lulled us to dreams.

In the camp the soldiers lolled about as usual, and interchanged their salutations and petty gossip.

‘Chokra idher ao,’¹ I heard General Napier say to a Hindostanee servant. ‘Compliments to Surgeon Sahib, and tell him I should like to see him.’

‘Surgeon Sahib come,’ reported the chokra.

‘Ah, all right. Good morning, Doctor. Beautiful day, is it not ? Have you your report ready ?’

‘Yes, Sir Robert,’ answered the surgeon, drawing a paper out from his pocket. ‘Here it is, sir ; one officer—Captain Roberts

¹ ‘Boy, come here.’

—and thirty-one privates wounded ; Captain Roberts severely, eight privates severely also.'

Curiosity satisfied on this point, we congratulated mutually. 'Only think of it, my dear old fellow—not one man killed, and but thirty-two wounded !' Let us now ascertain the casualties on the other side.

Captain Sweeny, of the 4th Foot, was sent with a detachment to bring in to the camp hospital all wounded Abyssinians that might be found on the battle-ground. I went with him. A frightful scene was presented to our eyes. The significant sounds of the past night had prepared me in a measure for some horrors, but reality exceeded my conception tenfold. The beasts of prey had been at work upon the bodies.

The dead were counted and buried where they fell, and the wounded fellows, who had lain in torture and pain during the night and had feebly warded off savage jaws, were conveyed in dhoolies to the hospital, and after three hours of such work the following report was handed in at head-quarters :

'Seventy-five wounded Abyssinians carried to hospital, 560 dead of the enemy buried by detailed party.' Dajatch Deris, the stout chief who had been so persistent in his attacks, was carried to the hospital with his leg broken by a bullet just above the knee. The body of Ras Ourary Guvrie was sent to the fortress during the night by General Napier that his own relations might bury him, and that Theodore might see the end of one of the best of his counsellors.

After breakfast I strolled near to Sir Robert Napier's tent.

'What is in the wind, captain ?' I asked Captain Holland, the Assistant Quartermaster-General.

'Nothing but rumours and twaddle flying loose around camp. I know nothing myself ; but I believe Sir Robert will send a demand for a surrender to Theodore, and after that I dare say he will move upon the enemy,' answered Captain Holland readily enough.

Captain Holland guessed rightly. Sir Robert Napier did intend to send a peremptory demand to Theodore, and decide what was best to be done after the receipt of his answer. What had been accomplished had differed altogether from what he had conceived would happen, and he was not going to act hastily. If Theodore was frightened by the exhibition of his prowess yesterday, then he was in a fit mood to listen to proposals. 'Agitel-el-Shaitan'—'hurry is the devil'—is the Arab proverb.

Upon his forbearance depended the lives of the captives, and the signal success of the campaign. A precipitous movement

upon either Fahla, Selasse, or Magdala would have deprived the desperate emperor of every ray of hope that his present tristful mind might have clung to, which, no doubt, would have caused him to order the immediate execution of the captives.

Having ended these few remarks, let us trace the bearer of the summons sent by Sir Robert.

Upon arriving halfway up the road that led to the gorge between Fahla and Selasse, the messenger to his great surprise discovered two strangers coming down the hill, who in a short time proved to be L—— P—— and the Reverend Mr. Flad—missionary—who were on their way to Sir Robert, with a message from the emperor. The messenger from the camp returned without performing his errand, with the prisoners.

Mr. P—— was invited inside the tent, and after a few preliminary observations about the weather—which were perhaps entirely unnecessary—the object of the visit was broached.

‘I have been sent down to you, Sir Robert, by the emperor,’ he said, ‘to ask why it is you have come to this country—what it is you want—whether you will return to your own country if the captives are released.’

‘Thank you,’ said Sir Robert quietly ; ‘my message you shall carry with you on your return ; but tell me of the result upon Theodore of yesterday’s battle.’

Then L—— P—— told of how Theodore had seen the gigantic elephants, with their ponderous loads upon their backs, coming down from Dahonte Dalanta, besides a long picturesque line of men in red, men in white, men in all colours of dress, followed by an interminable line of animals, winning admiration from him as he gazed upon the scene, causing him to exclaim that the great wish of a lifetime was about to be gratified. He was elated at the thought that he should see how soldiers, real soldiers, would conduct themselves in battle.

When the General and his Staff had appeared upon the plateau below, Theodore was instantly beset by his chiefs and warriors, who persuaded him to let them go and fight the Feringhees. After hesitating a long time he had seen the Battery of Mountain Train Artillery coming up, and thinking the ammunition-boxes on the mules contained the specie, he said : ‘Go, my children ; capture the treasure, and drive the Feringhees away.’ He had intended to lead them himself, but was dissuaded by his faithful chiefs.

He then had made the German engineers and gun-manufacturers in his employ fire the first guns. One of the big cannon had burst at the first discharge killing a great many of his men

who had crowded around it. The Germans, unwilling cannoneers, fired widely from the mark, which enraged him so much that he pointed the guns himself. But when he saw that English soldiers advanced upward steadily in spite of his chain-shot and 200-pound balls, he fell to weeping violently, gnashing his teeth and stamping upon the ground ; and his rage was increased when he saw his best army melt away before the withering volleys of the English.

He then began to threaten that the captives should pay for his defeat with their heads. When night came and the battle had ended, he took to drinking arachi to drown his bitterness.

Oblivion would not come, as his sufferings of mind were so acute. He had thrice attempted suicide, but his adherents kept good watch and prevented him. He moaned in his deep distress, calling for his favourite Generals ; for Ras Feet Ourary Guvrie, Dajatch Deris, Dajatch Workee ; but not a word could his attendants answer.

Then he would querulously say that he had an army of brave men once, but had only women now, and a paroxysm of hysterics would seize upon him as he thought of the fatal battle ; and much more to the same effect did Messrs. Flad and P—— repeat, to the wonder of Sir Robert.

‘Stop those women from crying !’ Theodore yelled furiously.

So crushing the defeat, that he could barely realise its extent or depth.

‘Go and kill those Feringhee captives, the cause of this ruin !’ he shouted to his soldiers.

‘No,’ whispered a grey-headed counsellor. ‘Preserve them. Send two of them down to the English General, and find out what he has to say.’

‘Ah ! yes,’ said he musingly, ‘that is best. Send Sooltan Rassam to me.’

Mr. Rassam appeared on the scene, and made his low obeisance before his sable Majesty. Theodore rose, and proffered him a seat on his own silken couch, offered him native wine, arachi, and tej. Rassam drank the emperor’s health.

After complimenting him upon the bravery of his (adopted) countrymen, of which he was a representative, Theodore proposed the question to him, ‘What shall I do ?’

Various things Rassam urged upon him, but the emperor could not make up his mind to do any of them, but he thought it would be best to send two of the most trustworthy of the captives to the Feringhee Chief, and ascertain his intentions.

Rassam also thought so, and suggested L—— P—— and Mr. Flad, as suitable and trustworthy men he knew.

‘Very well,’ answered Theodore, his mind greatly at ease. ‘Tell them to prepare themselves to convey my compliments and my message to the General.’

A fraternal embrace took place between the two, and many lovable phrases were interchanged before they parted for the night.

So much I learned from the other captives when they came to camp.

L—— P—— and Missionary Flad lunched with Sir Robert Napier, during which most of the above story was repeated to the General and the few of his Staff who lunched with him.

After P—— had communicated with the officers of the army, both envoys were instructed with the message they were to convey to Theodore. ‘Tell him from me,’ said Sir Robert, ‘that I require an instant surrender of the prisoners with their property, of himself and the fortresses of Selasse, Fahla, Magdala, and all therein. He may rest assured that honourable treatment shall be accorded him.’

About 3 P.M. the two captives before mentioned returned from the presence of Theodore (who had been infuriated for a short time at the answer they had brought him from Napier), with the prayer that the English commander should give him better terms, as he was a king and he could not surrender himself to any chief who served a woman. ‘Rather,’ stated Theodore in his letter, ‘than surrender, I would fight to the death. Can you not be satisfied with the possession of those you came for, and leave me alone in peace?’

They were sent back again, on their return to the fortress, about five o’clock, with the same reply as before. ‘You must surrender yourself unconditionally to the Queen of England. Be assured that honourable treatment shall be accorded to you.’

When P—— and Flad had commenced their return to camp with the second prayer for favourable terms, Rassam’s greatness of soul shone out through the mist of doubt which environed him.

‘Trust to me, your Majesty. Grant that all the captives go free to the English camp, and I will guarantee that the English Chief shall return to his own country.’

His Majesty believed in Rassam, and trusted to his influence to reconcile him with the Commander-in-Chief, and gave him orders to assemble immediately all the European captives, with every article of property that belonged to them, at the Thafurbar

Gate of the main fortress, and when all would be ready he would be there to bid them good-bye.

In an incredibly short space of time the captives had grouped themselves *en masse* at the gate, with their servants and their servants' servants, and their slaves.

They had not long to wait. Theodore arrived at the gate, clad in his robes, surrounded by his principal men. All the captives salaamed to him except one. His Majesty then gave the orders to open the gate, and the prisoners defiled before him, bowing low as they passed him.

'Adieu, Cameron,' Theodore addressed the Consul. 'We part friends, I hope?'

It was on the Consul's tongue to return cordially the parting salute; the knowledge of the man's coming doom awakened a kind of repentant pity in him for the fallen potentate; but the word could not issue smoothly. The wasted years of his life rose before him; he remembered his former condition, enwrapped in a dingy grey blanket, chained firmly to the wall; the fiendish tortures practised upon him; the cutting whip; the fate which impended over him for so long; and oh, the livelong days of mental agony and utter misery which he had passed as he witnessed the days flitting by, one by one, an interminable round of punishments, apparently uncared for by his Government. What wonder, then, that his spirit shrank from forgiving the wretched tyrant? But his position was still hazardous in the extreme, and policy compelled him to acknowledge the conciliatory farewell to Theodore.

'Adieu, your Majesty,' he said; and Consul Cameron passed on.

'Fare you well, Mr. Stern. Forgive me for what I did to you.'

Whether it was the Christian spirit that urged him to forgive, or whether it was the deadly fear he entertained of Theodore that caused him to respond to the salutation, is not known; but Mr. Stern salaamed low, saying, 'Farewell, your Majesty.'

'Ah, Kerens, is that you? Good-bye; I shall not see you any more.'

Young Kerens, with his fresh youthful impulses, with all his sufferings still strong in his mind, went up to Theodore, and clasping his hand, bent his head in obeisance, and said, 'Good-bye, your Majesty: I wish you well.'

'Ah, Sooltan Rassam, good-bye. I depend upon you to reconcile me with the English Chief. Be sure to come to me to-morrow with good news.'

‘Rest assured, your Majesty. I shall be certain to come to-morrow with good news. A good night to you, my emperor ;’ saying which, he walked through the gate, passed the barriers, and then breathed freer and healthier, he and the rest of them.

Instantly the news flashed through the army, and soldiers hurried to head-quarters by hundreds to wait for the released captives.

About 7 P.M. the first of the little column arrived at the camp, and halted before the Commander-in-Chief’s tent.

A guard of soldiers with bayonets kept back the curious crowds, to allow space for the caravan within the circle. As they came in there was a faint attempt at cheering heard, but it died away in an indistinct murmur as soon as he that started it found no one to second him.

There were women and children amongst them, and when the thin treble voice of a child was first heard, instead of cheering enthusiastically the great burly soldiers laughed. Yes, actually laughed !

Generally the captives looked in much better condition than we had been led to expect. Save three, all looked well : these were young Kerens, McElvey, an Irish boy-servant of Cameron, and a middle-aged man named Schrieber, one of Theodore’s engineers. These latter looked very pale, and were clothed like Romans, in lengthy togas, and straw hats of their own manufacture à la Crusoe. McElvey, the Irish boy, was exceedingly vivacious and merry.

In the hurry of departure Mrs. Flad had been left behind by Mr. Rassam, she being slightly ailing in health.

Mr. Flad had to go back to Magdala in the dead of night to get his wife and children, for he and P—— met the captives coming down Fahla slope, as they were the second time returning to Magdala.

These were the captives—sixty-one the total number of them—for whom the Crusade had been undertaken.

Their accounts had led us all to believe they were about to die ; that they were flogged every day ; that they were for ever in manacles ; naked ; a mass of sores and corruption ; and yet here they were, healthy, well-clad people.

The second day dawned after the exercises of Good Friday which proved fatal to so many of the Abyssinians.

The captives were all, with the exception of Mrs. Flad and Bardel, who were ill, in our camp. Their black and white and red tents outnumbered the army’s. According to the list, there should have been sixty-one persons ; there were forty-eight tents !

With these captives there were 187 servants and 323 animals. Mrs. Flad arrived safely by 9 A.M. that morning. The only one left in Magdala was A. Bardel, Artist and Professor, who was sick of a fever. It will be remembered that this man was the one who was accused of translating to Theodore the letters and papers of the missionaries, causing them to be flogged for writing defamatory articles about the emperor. I have stated that there were sixty-one to be released, number sixty-two was Theodore Morritz, born at ten o'clock the next morning after their arrival in the English camp, and was named Theodore, after the emperor.

The astonishment of Political Secretary Tweedy was very great when he read the list of captives and followers, and still greater when he found that about one-third of the servants were Abyssinian women.

Since we had taken position before Magdala no water could be found nearer than two miles ; but on the second day that supply failed us, and the road thither was so beset by the thieving Gallas that mules were constantly being stolen from the mule-teers by those unscrupulous natives. When it was perceived that the supply of water in the neighbourhood was totally inadequate for the large number of animals attached to the expedition, the whole 10,000 were taken to the Bechilo river, about seven miles off. Five hundred bheesties (bullocks for carrying water) were constantly employed in carrying water from the river for the use of the army.

Of such luxuries as grog, cigars, tobacco, sugar, tea, coffee, rice &c. we had none, as all had been left at our camp near Lat.

It was midday when 1,000 beeves and 500 sheep were sent by Theodore to Sir Robert Napier, with the hope that, as this day was Easter Sunday, the British soldiers should eat their fill, for were we not all Christians ?

As soon as Sir Robert heard this message he sent an officer up to Magdala, to say that he could not think of accepting anything from his Majesty until himself, his family, and the fortresses, were surrendered to the Queen of England.

In the afternoon more escalading ladders were made out of the dhoolie poles, the rungs being pickaxe handles. Powder charges, hand grenades &c. were also prepared ready for use.

The elephants, forty-two in number, having brought up the Armstrong battery to the camp, conveyed the guns in the evening to the ridge which divided our camp from the plain below Fahla. The mules were brought up from the Bechilo with two days' rations of grain, so that all would be in readiness for the assault

upon Magdala, which was expected to take place at noon of the next day.

Before going to sleep, Sir Robert Napier, unwilling to be harsh when there was the least chance for an amicable settlement, despatched a native courier with the final summons to surrender. He explained in his letter how useless and vain was resistance, and promised Theodore that he would be well treated if he delivered himself up, winding up with his declaration that if an affirmative answer were not received by him by nine o'clock next morning, he would move forward to the attack.

CHAPTER XI

PREPARING FOR THE END—A WELCOME FROM THIRTY THOUSAND—
THEODORE'S LAST CHALLENGE—THE BOMBARDMENT—AT THE GATES
OF MAGDALA—SUICIDE OF THE EMPEROR—WITHIN MAGDALA.

ON Easter Monday morning, April 13, 1868, the *réveille* was sounded, with bugle and drum. Soldiers shook themselves outside their tents, with many a sleepy yawn and growl, mingled with jest and laugh. The respective companies mustered themselves before their quarters; the roll was called, names were answered to; ranks were then broken, and the soldiers retired to breakfast.

Down the slope of Fahla, about the hour of eight in the morning, came eight Abyssinians appalled as chiefs of high rank—silken bodices and brocade gowns, with hair variously gotten up, according to taste, in plaits, curls or frizzles, necks heavy with pendent ornaments, breasts glittering with silver decorations. They advanced before Sir Robert's tent, and were immediately surrounded by a ring of soldiers, who were summoned to preserve order and keep an open space clear for the council.

On the English Commander presenting himself before them they salaamed lowly before him, and then announced to him, through their spokesman Aytoo Samuel (the favourite of the emperor), that they came down to deliver Fahla and Selasse into his hands upon the simple condition that they be allowed to depart unmolested. Their conditions met with the approval of Sir Robert, and he accordingly gave solemn promise that he

would protect them until they crossed the Bechilo on their way home.

On being questioned as to the whereabouts of his Majesty, the chiefs made known the fact that Theodore had departed soon after the receipt of the last summons from Sir Robert Napier, which must have been about midnight. They said that they expected that he had either gone to Gojam or to the camp of the Galla queen, Mastevat, in which latter case, though the Mohammedan queen was his deadly enemy, still, according to Mohammedan custom, his life was perfectly safe while in her camp.

This was a thing that General Napier had never dreamt of ; at least that he would be able to get away clear of the cordon of cavalry pickets that he had stationed rearward of Magdala, in the valley of the Melkaschillo, another mountain stream running parallel with the Bechilo. He immediately issued a proclamation that he would pay the sum of 50,000 dollars for Theodore, dead or alive ; and messengers were at once despatched with it to the camps of Wagshum Gobazye, Mastevat, Mohammedan queen of the Wollo Gallas, and Walkeit, Christian queen of the Asubo Gallas.

Sir Robert next determined upon occupying Fahla and Selasse, and moving upon Magdala, after strengthening himself in the former fortresses, and Sir Charles Staveley was commanded to muster his division on the plain below Fahla.

The great event upon which the campaign hinged was about to transpire. Then there were heard bugle sounds answering to each other as the different regimental bugles repeated the commands ; and lastly, regiments forming columns of fours debouched past their respective camps towards Fahla plain, preceded by a small army of musicians.

The 33rd Irish Regiment, 'Duke of Wellington's Own,' now restored to favour by their subsequent good conduct and prompt obedience since leaving Dildee, of awkward memory, marched to the exhilaratory quick-step sounds of 'Yankee Doodle.' This regiment was destined to play an important part in the last act of the drama. It was to lead the assaulting column.

Following the 33rd Foot went the 4th King's Own, the band playing 'Garry Owen.' Then went the 45th Foot (European), the band playing 'Cheer, Boys, Cheer.' After these splendid well-equipped regiments, numbering in the aggregate 1,600 Europeans, went the Sepoy regiments, the Beloochees, 800 strong, the Punjaubees, 800 strong, two companies 10th Native Indian Infantry, the Sappers and Miners, followed by Penn's Mountain Train Battery, with two mortars, and the Naval Brigade in

charge of the Rocket Battery. The cavalry numbered two companies 3rd Light Native Cavalry. The 3rd Dragoon Guards were sent rearward of Magdala as pickets to prevent the retreat of Theodore.

The road up to the low connecting ridge between Fahla and Selasse was very steep ; probably inclined one foot in three, but, like all roads that the emperor had made, it was too steep a gradient for an easy ascent. Presently Sir Robert Napier and Staff made their appearance, and I made bold to ascend with them. From a thousand points on the heights the road up Fahla slope was commanded, and all the officers admitted that a few Europeans, stationed behind the projecting masses of rock to contest the approach, would have materially changed the aspect of affairs.

So we defiled by fours past enormous boulders, as we went toiling up, until we found ourselves full under the noonday sun on the crest of the gorge between Fahla and its sister-fortress of Selasse.

The 3rd Light Cavalry, under Colonel Loch, had been despatched, soon after the chiefs came down to surrender the two fortresses, to take possession of them, and drive the natives out.

When the 33rd- Foot arrived upon the heights, six companies were detailed to aid the cavalry. They were marched to the extreme eastern end of Selasse, where they faced right about, and deploying across the height, advanced westward, steadily, with fixed bayonets, driving the natives before them out of the fortress as they came towards the road, on the top of which the English army halted. Captain Speedy was with Colonel Loch, riding hither and thither, assuring the chiefs and principal men that they would not be harmed, but that they must leave at once for the Fahla plain. Near the mouth of a pass, through which the natives must travel, a company of soldiers were seen drawn up on each flank of it, for the purpose of disarming them as they emerged from it. After descending through this pass the natives appeared upon the terraced ridge where the army was being halted.

At sight of the long lines of soldiers coming up, the natives recoiled in dismay ; but, reassured, they again advanced and halted on the terrace, until the road should be cleared for them to descend to the plain. Upon being satisfied by their chiefs that the Feringhees were their best friends, they came on the terrace between the army and the scarped sides of Selasse, and raised the welcome Li-li-li-li.

Men, women, and children, eager to greet the conquerors, rushed downward from Selasse, adding force and power to the

mass until it covered the whole area between the twin fortresses.

It was noonday, and the hottest sun that we had experienced.

So soon as the elephants loaded with the Armstrong battery had surmounted the ridge, at the word of command from a mounted officer, the soldiers urged the mob onward with their bayonets. The road became filled with the hurrying fugitives, then the slopes began to be covered with them. In the place of the welcome Li-li-li, rose a shrill threnody which thrilled even our souls as we gazed on the departing multitudes.

While these scenes were passing in view of the ridge whereon we halted, Colonel Loch and Captain Speedy were manœuvring at the extremity of Selasse, on the road which encircled that fortress, and hence led to Magdala.

A number of men were seen careering about on the plateau of Islamgee, which connected Selasse with Magdala. They were Abyssinians, mounted on ponies, dressed like chiefs; one was specially noticeable from the gorgeousness of his robes and the majesty of his person. This one rode a white horse very gaily caparisoned. When they beheld the cavalry rounding the angle of Selasse they retired slowly towards Magdala, firing as they went.

Once fairly upon the plateau of Islamgee, Speedy discovered that the object of that detachment of Abyssinian cavaliers was to secure a number of cannon and mortars lying at the Selasse end of the isthmus a few score yards to his right. Coming towards them from the direction of Fahla, were some artillery officers and two special correspondents of the London Press. Colonel Loch's cavalry and this other detachment of officers and specials met each other at the artillery park or arsenal of the emperor. The cannon were seized at once, and declared to be the property of her Majesty Queen Victoria. Most of the guns were of French and English manufacture; others there were evidently made by the Russian *employés* of Theodore.

After retiring to the base of Magdala, a few of the Abyssinian cavaliers made demonstrations as if they were anxious to charge, but were dubious of the result, and contented themselves with galloping about at the Magdala end. Standing by, apparently irresolute, were a hundred native foot soldiers; and a line of dark heads loomed darkly along the brow of the famous fortress, and now and then musket shots woke loud echoes.

Suddenly the horsemen made a dash towards Speedy and his companions in charge of the artillery park, and among them figured conspicuously the rider of the white horse. After coming

within three hundred yards of them, the natives halted ; and then Speedy discovered that the gorgeous rider of the white horse was no less a personage than THEODORE, EMPEROR OF ABYSSINIA !

Captain Speedy affirmed that the savage potentate shouted out a challenge : ‘Come on ; are ye women, that ye hesitate to attack a few warriors ?’

This, of course, made all minds easy at once concerning his whereabouts, which was very satisfactory to the army. A messenger was despatched to Sir Robert Napier to apprise him of the fact. No attention was paid to the challenge until he manifested a disposition to make an advance upon them, together with the foot soldiers and horsemen that were on the plateau. Then some soldiers of the 33rd were signalled to approach and take position, so as to command all paths leading to the valleys on either side of the plateau ; and a company of the 33rd, who had ascended Selasse to plant the colours thereon, were invited by signals to come and aid them in the defence of the captured artillery. Six of the guns were also loaded, and a few balls were sent hurtling amongst the natives, who had commenced a desultory firing. This had the desired effect ; for they immediately retired behind some low booths, temporarily erected for the accommodation of his people when the emperor first returned from Debra Tabor. A few more cannon-balls ousted them from their hiding-places there also ; and the little force of soldiers and Press gentlemen had the satisfaction of seeing Theodore and his men make a precipitate retreat up to Magdala Amba.

But from his rocky eyrie Theodore kept firing at all that came within range of his mountain citadel, and the detachment of the 33rd Infantry were finally teased into activity by the shots from Magdala. An aide-de-camp, however, shortly galloped up with express orders from Sir Charles Staveley to cease firing.

It was the noise of this firing that induced Sir Robert Napier to ride forward to reconnoitre. The 33rd Infantry were ordered to hoist the colours above Selasse, and the 45th to do the same above Fahla. The British flag was hoisted in both citadels at the same time. Two of Theodore’s strongholds had thus fallen.

Crossing over to the southern side of the intermediate ridge, the real magnitude and strength of Magdala became instantly apparent.

Suppose a platform of rock, oval in shape, a mile and a half in length, and from a half to three-quarters of a mile in width, rising 500 feet perpendicularly above a narrow plateau which connected its northern end with Selasse. The rock was Magdala—the plateau was Islamgee. On the western and southern sides

Magdala towered above the valley of the Melkaschillo 2,000 feet ; the eastern side rose in three terraces of about 600 feet in height one above another. Its whole summit was covered with houses, straw-thatched, of a conical shape. The extreme brow of the fortress was defended by a stone wall, on the top of which a hurdle revetment was planted ; but the side fronting Islamgee was defended by a lower wall and revetment, constructed nearly halfway up the slope. In the centre of the revetment was a barbican, up to which led the only available road to the fortress.

Leaving only a sufficient garrison to guard Fahla and Selasse, all the other troops were withdrawn to Islamgee, where they were massed behind the captured artillery.

Sir Robert Napier had taken much pains to ascertain the exact strength of the enemy and his defences. From one point only was Magdala assailable, and that was the side which fronted us as we stood upon Islamgee. Longer and stronger escalading ladders than the army had made would have been requisite. But it was believed that, though no attack was meditated upon any other point than the northern front, all avenues of egress were blocked ; the investment being made by regular European cavalry, the 3rd Dragoon Guards.

Penn's Battery of Mountain Train Artillery was ordered to take position to the right of the captured pieces at a distance of 800 yards from Magdala. Twiss's Battery of Mountain Train Artillery was posted on Selasse, a full thousand yards from the object of attack. The Armstrong Battery was posted on the intermediate ridge between Fahla and Selasse, at a distance of 2,500 yards from Magdala ; thus the Armstrong Battery and Penn's were posted each on the horn of a crescent curving towards Magdala, which would give a convergent fire. The eight-inch mortars had also been posted to the left of the Armstrong Battery.

At 2 P.M. Penn's Battery piped for battle, and its notes rang out clear and loud.

All the artillery then warmed into action ; and soon twenty guns, of all calibre were thundering at the gates of Magdala.

During the energetic bombardment one of the correspondents asked me if I had seen Theodore's last handiwork. I replied in the negative. He then said that he could show it to me ; leading me, at the same time, to the edge of the precipice, when he pointed downward, and, looking in that direction, I saw a sight which beggars description. Below me lay 308 dead people, piled one upon another, stripped naked, in a state of corruption, with gyves and fetters round their limbs.

The late captives said that they were present during the execution ; that the prisoners were manacled hand and foot, and that they were sabred and shot by Theodore and his men as they lay helpless on the ground. Many of them, it is said, struggled to their knees and entreated for mercy, but it was of no avail. They were butchered to the last soul. This took place the day we arrived upon the Dahonte Dalanta plateau, April 9.

Sir Robert Napier perceived during the bombardment, which lasted two hours, that the defenders were weak, and that his troops would suffer no great loss in the assault. He therefore ordered the Royal Engineers, the 33rd, the 45th, and the 'King's Own,' to prepare for the final work.

The musketry from the fortress had ceased soon after the British artillery had opened fire. The troops destined for the storming were drawn out in battalions at quarter distance, across Islamgee, facing Magdala. The Engineers, under the command of Major Gordon Pritchard, were in front of the battalions deployed as skirmishers. Soon signals for rapid firing were made to the artillery, and under the furious cannonade which now commenced, the troops began their march along the plateau with trailed arms. Upon arriving within fifty yards of the base of Magdala the artillery ceased firing, and the Royal Engineers at once opened fire with their Sniders, which was taken up by the 33rd and 45th, who plied their breech-loading rifles with admirable rapidity, raining a storm of leaden pellets for ten minutes.

Theodore and his faithful adherents had lain concealed during the artillery fire ; but so soon as it ceased, up he sprang, sounding his war cry ; and with his followers he hurried to the gates and defences, determined to give the advancing columns the benefit of a reception worthy of an emperor who was about to conquer or die.

He arrived at the barbican and lowest revetment, posted his men at the loopholes and along the wall topped with the wattled hurdles. As he saw the soldiers still firing while they faced right, and wheeled into columns of fours for the purpose of ascending the path that led up to the barbican, his signal was given, and their presence was known to the English by sharp shot falling amongst them, wounding several.

Instantly the British fire was concentrated on the barbican and the suspicious revetment, through the interstices of which wreaths of pearly smoke issued, indicating the presence of the dogged riflemen. At this time, as on Good Friday, lightning and thunder played and rattled, as fit accompaniments of a battle, and the rain fell in large warm drops, splashing heavily on our

heads. But through the pelting shower the soldiers advanced, scrutinising suspiciously granite embrasures and natural basalt battlements that shot up here and there on the brow of the cliff of Magdala.

Still preceded by the Engineers, and still sowing the deadly missiles over every inch of the slope, they arrived at and halted near the barbican.

For a minute there was a pause, and again a dozen shots hurtled amongst the more advanced of the Engineers, wounding Major Pritchard and three or four of them; but they were immediately replied to by a thousand directed at each spot from whence the reports came, and Major Pritchard and Lieutenant Morgan—the latter a most enthusiastic officer—made a dash upon the barbican to effect an entrance. They found the gate closed, and the inside of the square tower completely blocked up with stones to the depth of ten feet, so that a passage through was not readily available.

Drummer M'Guire of the 33rd thought he would climb up the cliff wall. Surmounting a ledge, he ascended another in the same way, and then turned round and shouted aloud that he had found an opening. With a fierce cheer, which was faintly heard on Islamgee, he faced the wall on the height, hotly seconded by Private Bergin of the same regiment.

The whole regiment, now urged by the bold example of their comrades, scrambled up the almost perpendicular slope, and after a few minutes of breathless work they surmounted the ledges, and seeing men suspiciously moving about on the summit of Magdala they opened fire, at once sweeping them away.

Intruding their rifles into the interstices of the hurdle fence they lifted it up, and in a second had passed over the lower defences. Scattering themselves over the ground, they made simultaneously for the other defence, which was seventy-five feet above them, passing over several ghastly relics of the battle.

Shortly we heard them firing quickly, eagerly, as they discovered their enemies moving about. Then were heard their clubbed muskets beating a fierce 'rat-tat-tat' upon the gates. Big rocks were thrown by them with a crashing force against the gates, and now and again they pertinaciously fired through every crevice and loophole. No obstacle could stop the excited Irishmen. They prised up the fence; they leaped forward, and fired volleys into the very faces of the Abyssinians.

But we must not forget the charge of Drummer M'Guire and Private Bergin upon Magdala. The two men were advancing onward, a few paces from each other, to the upper revetment,

when they saw about a dozen fellows aiming at them. They instantly opened fire, and so quick and so well delivered was it that but few of their assailants escaped. Seeing a host of red-coats advancing upward, the others retreated precipitately. Over the upper revetment both men made their way, and at the same time they observed a man standing near a grass-stack with a revolver in his hand. When he saw them prepare to fire he ran behind it, and both men heard plainly a shot fired. Advancing in search they saw the man who had run behind, lying prostrate on the ground, dying, with the revolver still convulsively clutched in his right hand. To their minds the revolver was but their proper loot, and without any ceremony they took up what they considered their own; but on a silver plate on the stock, during an examination of it, they perceived an inscription which read thus:

PRESENTED
BY
VICTORIA
QUEEN OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND
TO
THEODORUS
EMPEROR OF ABYSSINIA
AS A SLIGHT TOKEN OF HER GRATITUDE
FOR HIS KINDNESS TO HER SERVANT PLOWDEN
1854

‘F’what d’y’e think, Pat; can this be that unblessed deevil of a Theodorus, the No-goose as they call him?’ asked M’Guire.

‘Meb-be, Mac; can’t say; but we had better sthop near him till the Sergeant shows his phiz inside Mag-dá-la. Och, here he comes!’

They saw a swaying line of Irish soldiers advancing, and at once these two men raised their sun helmets, and, swinging them round their heads, they shouted, ‘Hurrah!’

With heads bent low, the ‘Duke’s Own’ came surging up almost intact; the colour-bearer in the centre. Near the spot where the dying man, who had been drawn out to the open, lay, the centre of the regiment halted.

At this moment the rain ceased, and the sun shone forth into the full power of his departing splendour.

Eagerly stepped out the standard-bearer at the word of command, and triumphant, in all its silken bravery, streamed the ‘Wavy Cross’ above the surrounding world of mountains—an omen to all beholders that the tyrant emperor had been humbled, and that his stronghold, MAGDALA, had passed into the



GOING UP TO ATTACK MAGDALA

strangers' hands. As it fluttered in mid air, the 'Duke's Own' doffed helmets, and simultaneously cheered loudly. The cheers were heard far below ; others repeated them, until finally those at the British camp nearly two miles off caught the sounds, and strengthened the universal 'Hurrah.' Strains of music burst from the bands. The National Anthem, 'God save the Queen,' was never played or sung with greater effect or vigour than when the hoary crags of Magdala responded to its notes in an overwhelming chorus of echoes !

A few unarmed Abyssinians, attracted by the clamour of music and shouting, mustered courage enough to approach the standard, and on beholding one of their countrymen on the ground, they bent over the body, but quickly recoiled with fearful dismay on their faces, exclaiming, 'Todros ! Todros !'

The words attracted the attention of everyone, and together they strode towards the body, jostling each other eagerly in the endeavour to obtain a glimpse of him the natives styled 'Todros Negus, Negashi of Itiopia !'

And what did they see ? The body of a native, seemingly half-famished ; clad in coarse upper garments, dingy with wear, and ragged with tear, covering under garments of clean linen !

The face of deep brown was the most remarkable one in Abyssinia ; it bore the appearance of one who had passed through many anxious hours. His eyes, now fading, gave evidence yet of the piercing power for which they were celebrated. The mouth was well defined and thin-lipped. The lower lip seemed adapted to express scorn, and a trace of it was still visible. As he gasped his last, two rows of white teeth were disclosed. Over his mouth two strong lines arched to a high aquiline nose. The face was broad, high-cheek-boned, with a lofty, prominent forehead, and overhanging eyebrows. The hair was divided into three large plaits extending from the forehead to the back of the neck, which latter appeared to be a very tower of strength. The body measured five feet and eight inches, and was very muscular and broad-chested. There was a character about the features, denoting great firmness or obstinacy mingled with ferocity ; but perhaps the latter idea was suggested upon remembering the many cruelties ascribed to him. And this is how we saw the remains of him who had called himself THEODORUS, EMPEROR OF ABYSSINIA, THE DESCENDANT OF MENILEK ; SON OF SOLOMON, KING OF KINGS, LORD OF EARTH, CONQUEROR OF ETHIOPIA, REGENERATOR OF AFRICA, AND SAVIOUR OF JERUSALEM, now dying—dead by his own hand !¹

¹ At the post-mortem examination the surgeons found that, excepting

The Irish soldiers took hold of his legs, and roughly dragged him to a hammock, where, after two or three gasps, he breathed his last.

Curious remarks were passed upon the body by those who surrounded it. One man, with a spice of Latin in him, uttered sententiously, 'Sic semper tyrannis,' to which many a one responded heartily, 'Amen and amen!' Another Celtic warrior hoped the scoundrel would trouble 'nobody no more;' and another, with some regard for decency, covered up the bared abdomen, evened the nether limbs, and folded the arms upon the breast.

Larger grew the crowds around the body. Officers and privates as they came up hastened to get a glimpse of it. The released captives hurried to obtain a farewell glance at their dead captor, and when they recognised him all doubts as to his identification were at an end. Theodore had been fighting in disguise, knowing that bright colours attracted the marksmen. The Commander-in-Chief with his Staff rode up to view the corpse, but not one kind word of sympathy for the dead emperor's fate was uttered. He who had been merciless to others was not deserving of sympathy.

Not until the last moment, when on the threshold of certain defeat, did he surrender his life. Seeing speedy death in the levelled muskets of the advancing soldiers, he had quickly retired behind the stack, and with the muzzle of the revolver—the Queen's gift—in his mouth, the Imperial Suicide had fired, and died.

The advance was sounded, and the regiments with arms aslope filed off in columns through the narrow streets of Magdala, the Commander-in-Chief and Staff following. Passing through a long lane flanked by storehouses with conical thatched roofs, they came to a large open space on the southern side, which was probably used by the emperor as a parade or drill-ground.

At the upper extremity of this open area, near a number of black tents, were seen several groups of armed natives, who fired two or three shots as they perceived the soldiers. The 23rd formed line, deploying across its whole width, and opened fire upon them, steadily advancing the while. Before the determined approach of the soldiers and their withering fire, the

a slight flesh wound in the right leg, he was uninjured by foreign missiles. The palate was destroyed and the roof of the mouth scorched, and a hole was found through the back of the head. The united opinion of the medical authorities was that a pistol fired in the mouth had caused the death.



THE END OF KING THEODORE

last remnants of Theodore's army incontinently fled down the cliffs, led by his illegitimate son Dajatchmatch Masheshai.

When the Irish regiment arrived at the eastern extremity, having traversed its whole length, another flag was raised to announce the complete capture of the fortress ; and the Prince with his flying warriors must have heard the cheers that greeted the flag as it waved, as well as the martial strains of 'Rule, Britannia ;' the Gallas, on the alert on the opposite mountains of the Walla Galla country, must have heard it also.

When Sir Robert Napier appeared, the music was changed to 'See the conquering Hero comes !' and other rousing cheers and anthem chants, amid mutual congratulations, closed the
STORMING OF MAGDALA,

CHAPTER XII

THE EMPEROR'S HOUSEHOLD—LOOT—THE GENTLEMEN IN BLACK—THE DEAD TYRANT

AFTER the important incidents recorded in the last chapter, the soldiers strayed away from their respective regiments by twos and threes, and commenced an assiduous search for loot.

In their wanderings the soldiers came to the Imperial residence—a barn-like dwelling, two-storeyed, substantial and thatched with straw. Close by were the Imperial kitchens, the harems, the stables, the storehouses and the great prison, which inclosed a quadrangular area.

In the open space a multitude of females were discovered gathered together. These females composed the women of the emperor's household. Surrounded by the ladies of her court, was found the Empress Etegie Torenachie—daughter of Prince Ubie of Samen and Tigre, a nut-brown lady of six-and-twenty, or thereabouts, good-looking, but pale and consumptive-looking. Her character, as reported by the captives, had been sufficient to cause the soldiers when they perceived her to pay her every respect. For a long time—at least so long as Theodore was sober—the empress was as a guardian angel to him ; advising him like the 'Good Book,' as a soldier pertinently expressed it. While Theodore was at Debra Tabor, preparing for his expedition

to Magdala, she resided at the latter fortress. Twice during the time it was besieged by King Menilek of Shoa, with an army of 40,000 (perhaps an extravagant number), the chiefs and elders wished to surrender the place ; but the empress was resolute in its defence, and saved it.

Playing about her maidens was the heir-apparent, Prince Ala Mayu, a sturdy, intelligent little boy of eight years old. So soon as Sir Robert Napier was made aware of their presence in the fortress, Captain Speedy received orders from him to take them in charge and pay them every attention.

As the soldiers searched about, a party of them stumbled upon the storehouse, where scores of twenty-gallon jars were found brimful of tej of good flavour ; and the joyful cries which they uttered brought down many others to join in the 'liquoring up.'

Another party of soldiers, diving into the barn-like dwelling called the Palace, perceived innumerable articles of furniture strewn about. One thing upon another the men picked up ; then, examining the article, pocketed it or threw it down ; to be picked up, examined, and pocketed or thrown away by others coming after them. Little of the whole was worth carrying away by soldiers who would be obliged to convey luggage on their backs hundreds of miles.

Opposite the Palace was the prison of Magdala—a strong double-storeyed dwelling—whence cries were heard.

It was discovered to be crowded with native prisoners. Some of them were of high rank in the different provinces. Princes, generals, peasants stood in surprised groups, heavily manacled and fettered. The soldiers tore their fetters and manacles off, and with hearts full of gratitude the people stepped out into the sunlight, once more free !

Some provisions found in the store-rooms were distributed amongst them, and they were then ushered out of the gates.

There was an endless variety of dwellings—silken and canvas tents, cotes, and such like ; and each of these had around it a knot of men, commenting, gossiping, pocketing, analysing, breaking into pieces, or tearing into shreds, whatever thing their vision or fancy lit upon.

The ground was strewn with an abundance of seemingly costly things. The glitter certainly was great, and if all that glittered among these tons of treasure were gold, the English Government need not have entertained much concern about the cost of the Expedition. But taking up a shining candlestick—massive and curiously gotten up—I perceived the worthlessness of the material ; and though there was a very considerable number of wares

manufactured out of the precious metal, the major part of them were gilt.

Over these trifles the people sprawled and cuffed ; and prominent amongst them were persons in black coats, endeavouring to pack off the silken marquees. These gentlemen in black were some of the captives.

Several of them had secured this loot long before the soldiers had arrived. It lay in piles at their feet, or had been already spirited away under the envious coat-tails. It was reported that one of these wretches had the audacity to break open the coffin of the Abuna, and snatch from the neck of the corpse a diamond cross worth many thousand dollars.

The fame of the treasures brought new comers by hundreds, and General Sir Robert Napier, Generals Staveley, Wilby, Snyder, and their respective staffs, came to visit them ; and these gentlemen, together with the members of the Press—to the honour of the Fourth Estate be it said—were the only ones exempt from the picking and pocketing mania which had taken possession of all heroes.

In one of the tents was found the Imperial standard of Ethiopia—a lion rampant, of the tribe of Judah, worked in variegated colours. In another was found the Imperial seal, with the same distinctive figure of a lion engraved on it. A chalice of pure gold was secured by Mr. Holmes, on which was engraved in ancient Ethiopic :

THE CHALICE OF
KING ADAM LEGUD CALLED GAZOO
THE SON OF
QUEEN BEHAN MOGUSSA
PRESENTED TO KOSKWAN SANCTUARY GONDAR
MAY MY BODY AND SOUL BE PURIFIED

(15th Century.)

The Abuna's mitre, 300 years old, of pure gold, probably weighing six or seven pounds troy weight ; four royal crowns, two of which were very fine specimens of workmanship, and worth a round sum of money ; were worthy things to be placed in the British Museum. A small escritoire, richly ornamented with mother-of-pearl, was found also, full of complimentary letters from European sovereigns, and state papers ; besides various shields of exquisite beauty. There was also an infinite variety of gold, and silver, and brass crosses, and censers, some of extremely elegant design ; golden and silver pots, kettles, dishes, pans ; cups of miscellaneous descriptions ; richly chased goblets,

of the precious metal ; Bohemian glasses, Sèvres china, and Staffordshire pottery ; wine of Champagne, Burgundy, Greece, Spain, and Jerusalem ; bottles of Jordan water ; jars of arrachi and tej ; chests full of ornamental frippery ; tents of rose, purple, lilac, and white silk ; carpets of Persia, of Uschak, Broussa, Kidderminster, and Lyons ; robes of fur ; war capes of lion, leopard, and wolf skins ; saddles, magnificently decorated with filigree gold and silver ; numerous shields covered with silver plates ; state umbrellas of gorgeous hues, adorned with all the barbaric magnificence that the genius of Bejemder and Gondar could fashion ; swords and claymores ; rapiers, scimitars, yataghans, tulwars, and bilboes ; daggers of Persia, of Damascus, and of Ind, in scabbards of crimson morocco and purple velvet, studded with golden buttons ; heaps of parchment royally illuminated ; stacks of Amharic Bibles ; missals, and numberless albums ; ambrotypes and photographs of English, American, French, and Italian scenery ; bureaus, and desks of cunning make. Over a space growing more and more extended, the thousand articles were scattered until they dotted the surface of the rocky citadel, the slopes of the hill, and the entire road to camp two miles off !

From this scene I strolled away to the northern gate, to where the dead body of the late Master of Magdala lay, on his canvas stretcher. I found a mob of officers and men, rudely jostling each other in the endeavour to get possession of a small piece of Theodore's blood-stained shirt.

No guard was placed over the body until it was naked, nor was the slightest respect shown it. Extended on its hammock, it lay subjected to the taunts and the jests of the brutal-minded. An officer, seeing it in this condition, informed Sir Robert Napier of the fact, who at once gave orders that it should be dressed and prepared for interment on the morrow.

The barrier that defended the ingress of the fortress, though rudely constructed, was well designed ; that is, of course, taking into consideration that it must be built with the tools and materials which Theodore used. The passage to it ran below two walls of sheer basalt rock, rising from 15 feet at the embouchure to 30 feet over the barrier. The gate was 6 feet high, constructed of solid wood, composed of two upright stiles and two horizontal sails, strengthened by diagonal braces on each side of the stiles. It opened internally, and was fastened by a bar of wood running from post to post and from wall to wall. It was 8 feet wide at the clear.

In the interior of the passage were built two or three short



VIEW NEAR THE KING'S HOUSE, MAGDALA

stone traverses, and along the summit of each basalt wall was erected an abattis.

Taken altogether, it was a very defensible place, and one 12-pounder would have rendered it impassable ; but Theodore had planted his cannon upon Fahla and Selasse, and, defeated at Aroje, he had delayed their removal to Magdala because for two days he was not without hope that peace was being negotiated by his dear friend Rassam. When finally he came to the conclusion that peace was impossible, he had commenced their removal on the third morning ; but, as I have described already, he was surprised in the act by Speedy and Loch in command of the 3rd Cavalry.

The number of dead variously amounted to about sixty natives, and double that number wounded. The British loss was seventeen wounded, none mortally. The bombardment of the fortress continued for over two hours, and it is wonderful that, out of the 4,000 people who inhabited it, innocent lives were not sacrificed. But out of the wounded of Aroje battle there were hundreds who had taken shelter in the straw cotes on Islamgee. Every alternate house was a hospital, housing one or more meagre wretches.

The rockets had wrought utter desolation among some of the villages below Islamgee, eastward. One rocket in particular diverged widely from its intended mark, and darted through one of these combustible houses, setting fire to it instantly, and the wind fanned it until it reduced the whole group of villages in a short time to ashes.

Bardel, the French professor, the only European who had not arrived at camp with the others, because he was sick with fever as I have already mentioned, was found in high delirium, in a little booth at the Selasse end of Islamgee, surrounded by offal and filth, and covered with verminous rags. He was taken so soon as found to the military hospital, where he received every attention, and finally, after a week's severe illness, he recovered his health.

All that I have related took but three hours. It was optional with civilians either to remain upon Magdala and rough the night out in some hut, or proceed to the camp below Fahla, two miles off ; but, after an examination of several huts, we decided to proceed to camp.

On Islamgee we met the camp followers, mules and horses, dhoolies and stretchers, in never-ending continuity. Below Islamgee we met the elephants with their enormous packs on their backs, looking like phantoms in the dark ; and in the

friendly shadows of the night the flitting forms of the Magdala fugitives pressing forward to the valley of Aroje.

Once past Fahla, we stumbled down the slope with reckless force, until we came in full view of the camp of the Abyssinians—who left Fahla and Selasse early in the morning—all aglow with fires. Far away in the eastern horizon a long belt of flame was visible—a warning beacon to native stragglers ; for there the ferocious Gallas looked wide-eyed and wondering upon the sea of fire about our camp.

We passed right through the Abyssinian camp, which was pitched on the plain, where the battle of Aroje first began—around the graves of hundreds of their people—and half a mile beyond was our own. On approaching it we heard songs, and shouts for lost friends, and a combination of novel sounds. While travelling through, at the imminent risk of crushing some one to death under our horses' feet, we came suddenly upon the white snowy tents, rearing themselves in ghostly silence from the ground, around which we saw whole multitudes, who, adopting the bivouac, had stretched themselves on the earth and were already deep in slumber, dreaming, no doubt, of acknowledgments by grateful England of their conduct at the fall of Magdala !

CHAPTER XIII

INTERMENT OF THEODORE—THE RIVAL QUEENS—FAREWELL TO MAGDALA—GENERAL NAPIER'S ORDER—THE AUCTION OF LOOT—OFFICIAL REPORTS.

BEFORE quitting the neighbourhood of Magdala there were various things to be performed : Theodore's body had to be interred ; his empress was to be consoled ; the young Prince's fate had to be decided ; the hungry hordes of Gallas, called into unpleasant activity, had to receive their quietus ; the Abyssinian fugitives had to be escorted across the Bechilo ; the fortress structures demolished ; and, lastly, the triple mountain citadels had to be delivered over to some responsible authority.

The first day was occupied in marching the victorious troops back to camp, with the exception of a regiment which was left

as garrison ; in burying the dead chiefs who fell within Magdala ; in distributing provisions to the homeless Abyssinians—numbering over 30,000—who were encamped a bullet's flight from us.

The Imperial relict's wishes concerning the interment of her husband were ascertained before Sir Robert Napier decided upon Theodore's funeral. She replied that she was willing that the Commander-in-Chief should do as he felt disposed, but hoped the prayers of his own Church might be read over him by his favourite chaplain. To this the General made no objection, and accordingly directed a party to decently swathe the body in silken cerements preparatory to burial. That task done, the body was extended on a rough bier, and conveyed to the church wherein Sir Robert Napier had directed he should be buried. A shallow grave had been dug in the centre of the building. The chaplain—an old decrepit monk—was called in and requested to read prayers over the body. Apparently very distasteful was the task, for he used exceeding haste in its performance. The body was then lowered by two stout soldiers into the grave ; the monk took and scattered a handful of soil over it ; the shovels soon hid all out of sight.

A messenger was despatched that day to Wagshum Gobazyé, proffering him Magdala. The General received an answer on the third morning from that wily prince that he did not want it ; that he had been smart enough to keep out of Magdala while Theodore was alive, and now that he was dead he did not care to make himself a voluntary prisoner in it, as he would be, he thought, surrounded as the Bechilo Valley was by the Galla forces. He added, moreover, that if Sir Robert would be kind enough to present him with Theodore's cannon as well as the fortress, he might think better of the gift, as he would then be furnished with the means for its defence.

Gobazyé was distinguished for nothing else than masterly retreats, or acting the part of a detective from a distance, always from safe positions. During two months he kept himself engaged in viewing Theodore's camp from some inaccessible peak or other, and the last movement on the part of the emperor was sufficient to make the Wagshum beat a hasty retreat to farther regions. Napier could not see the benefit accruing to him or to the country by a change of masters. Wagshum Gobazyé was more unprincipled than Theodore, and but a trifle less cruel, so neither Magdala nor cannon was given to him.

On the second day the two rival queens, Walkeit and Masteevat, came forward as candidates for Magdala, under the

ciceroneship of Meer Akbar Ali, who had been despatched to obtain their aid in hemming Theodore in. Masteevat, the younger of the two—fat, fair, and forty—was preferred by Sir Robert. During her stay in the British camp she was received with all due honours, and apportioned a silken tent as a residence. She and her little son, a boy of six, very handsome, of the colour of a Spaniard, were arrayed in the most gorgeous finery that native genius could manufacture.

The General's cooks had their culinary knowledge taxed to the utmost to provide dainties for the royal family; and the queen, nothing loth to show her appreciation of such talent and skill in the *cuisine*, ate like a *gourmande* of each and every article, never deigning to examine the materials, but disposing of what came before her, without regard to the horrified looks of the Political Secretary—pudding before beef, blancmange with potatoes, drinking coffee before finishing her fricandeau, emitting labial smacks like pistol cracks when a more savoury dish than common pleased her palate.

Her Majesty often vented her satisfaction by hearty, boisterous guffaws, and proceeded liberally to wipe her unctuous mouth with the tail end of her turban, for which she specially untied it; while a tawny-faced Hebe, with the bust and form of a Venus, brought her a horn of tej strongly mixed with arrachi (her usual quantum being a quart), which she quaffed with infinite gusto, looking more imposing after it than before.

Some Iago of an officer, possessed of a tongue that would charm the d—l, managed to persuade the queen to sit for her portrait; and after three or four trials, during which she looked awry and unnatural, a very good one was taken, and copies of the same have been sent to all the Governments of Europe, as well as to the United States.

The third day was employed in destroying the cannon of Theodore, thirty-three in number.

All this time we were suffering severely from want of water and scarcity of provisions. However, the hearts of all were gladdened on the fourth morning at the gladsome tidings that the army would leave the Bechilo Valley for Dalanta plateau on the next day.

On the fourth morning after the fall of Magdala, the Abyssinians, to the number of 30,000, commenced their march for Dalanta. The Gallas, it seems, were aware of the fact; for they hovered on their flanks and rear, sometimes dashing boldly into the main body, and capturing many prisoners.

At 3 P.M. I rode up along with several others to see the last

of the fortress. Two hours afterwards, every living soul being driven out by the Royal Engineers, those deputed for the task of destruction began their work. The Kafurbar, or southern gate, was blown up first ; then the eastern towers and magazines ; and, as the wind was from the eastward, fire was set to the houses at the extreme eastern end of the fortress, and, retrograding quickly, the nimble Engineers touched each house with their fiery wands. The spectators made haste to secure good positions whence the mighty conflagration, soon destined to appear, could be seen to advantage ; and the best place they could select was the southern end of Selasse, which looked into Magdala from a distance of 1,000 yards.

The easterly wind gradually grew stronger, fanning the incipient tongues of flame visible on the roofs of houses until they grew larger under the skilful nursing, and finally sprang aloft in crimson jets, darting upward and then circling round on their own centres as the breeze played with them. A steady puff of wind levelled the flaming tongues in a red wave, and the jets became united into an igneous lake ! Three thousand houses, and a million of combustible things, were burning. Not one house could have escaped destruction in the mighty ebb and flow of that deluge of fire.

On the 18th of April, 1868, we turned our faces northward for the homeward march.

At 8 A.M. the vanguard defiled down the slope of the plain of Fahla towards the Aroje ravine and the Bechilo. The baggage trains were then started, and by 10 A.M. the road was clear for the army.

The regiments were drawn up as if on parade—Infantry, Cavalry, Artillery, Engineers, Sappers and Miners, in order. As the chief mounted his horse the order ‘March !’ was heard, and preceded by its band the 45th Regiment, with sloped muskets, moved down the slope to martial tunes ; then the Native Indian regiments, horse and foot ; then the Artillery and Naval Brigade ; and lastly went the ‘Duke of Wellington’s Own.’ As the most rearward of the regiment took up the step and got firmly under way, cheer after cheer burst forth from over six thousand voices, until the Gallas, on the *qui vive* ten miles off, were made aware by these sounds that the soldiers had said their ‘Farewell !’

Magnificently stern and sombre the triple citadels raised their lofty heads far above the mountains forming the southern horizon, which, mingling with the morning sky, glowed in radiant colours, and would have served for a rare background for any landscape.

Magdala was covered with a haze, the smoke of the still smouldering embers rising upward like that of an incense offered to appease Divine wrath!

It was determined to allow the animals of the transport trains to recruit their strength with the aid of their plenitude of provender and other supplies gathered on the plateau during our absence before Magdala. Accordingly, a gentle depression in the centre of the plateau was fixed upon as the camp site.

An important matter remained to be attended to. The mass of trophies collected at Magdala were to be sold to those gentlemen who had either a superfluity of cash, or who leaned to antiquarian tastes, for the benefit of the soldiers engaged at the front. Commanding officers were requested to select what things they thought most appropriate as mementoes for their regiments or troops. Fifteen elephants and nearly 200 mules were loaded with these miscellaneous articles.

At 9.30 A.M., to the solemn beat of drum, the different regiments marched out of their respective camps to a level eminence 200 yards off, where they formed one large hollow square, with the captives, officers and generals in the centre.

There was hardly a dry eye in the vast assembly when the clergyman finished a discourse which referred feelingly to the position of the captives and the triumph of our cause. It made a deep impression upon all who heard it; and the tones of the voice, the glad sunlight, the wall of mountains in the far distance like a dark shadow, the warblings of the birds above and around, and the drifting clouds, will be remembered by those present as a Sunday unequalled in the calendar!

On the next day there was a brilliant and impressive general review of the army of Abyssinia.

The division lastly formed a hollow square six deep; the captives, foreign officers and civilians, were invited within. The Adjutant-General, Colonel Fred. Thesiger, then read aloud the General Order, reviewing in glowing language the objects and the incidents of the campaign:

‘SOLDIERS OF THE ARMY OF ABYSSINIA,—The Queen and the people of England entrusted to you a very arduous and difficult expedition—to release our countrymen from a long and painful captivity, and to vindicate the honour of our country, which had been outraged by Theodorus, King of Abyssinia.

‘I congratulate you with all my heart on the noble way in which you have fulfilled the commands of our Sovereign.

‘You have traversed, often under a tropical sun, or amid



storms of rain and sleet, 400 miles of mountainous and difficult country.

‘You have crossed many steep and precipitous ranges of mountains, more than 10,000 feet in altitude, where your supplies could not keep pace with you.

‘When you arrived within reach of your enemy, though with scanty food, and some of you for many hours without either food or water, in four days you passed the formidable chasm of the Bechilo, and defeated the army of Theodorus, which poured down upon you from their lofty fortress in full confidence of victory.

‘A host of many thousands have laid down their arms at your feet.

‘You have captured and destroyed upwards of thirty pieces of artillery, many of great weight and efficiency, with ample stores of ammunition.

‘You have stormed the almost inaccessible fortress of Magdala, defended by Theodorus with the desperate remnant of his chiefs and followers.

‘After you forced the entrance, Theodorus, who never showed mercy, distrusted the offer of mercy held out to him, and died by his own hand.

‘You have released not only the British captives but those of other friendly nations. You have unloosed the chains of more than ninety of the principal chiefs of Abyssinia.

‘Magdala, on which so many victims have been slaughtered, has been committed to the flames, and remains only a scorched rock.

‘Our complete and rapid success is due, first, to the mercy of God, Whose hand I feel assured has been over us in a just cause ; secondly, to the high spirit with which you have been inspired.

‘Indian soldiers have forgotten the prejudices of race and creed, to keep pace with their European comrades.

‘Never has an army entered on a war with more honourable feelings than yours ; this has carried you through many fatigues and difficulties ; you have been only eager for the moment when you could close with your enemy.

‘The remembrance of your privations will pass away quickly, but your gallant exploit will live in history.

‘The Queen and the people of England will appreciate your services.

‘On my part, as your commander, I thank you for your devotion to your duty, and the good discipline you have main-

tained. Not a single complaint has been made against a soldier, of fields injured, or villagers wilfully molested in person or property. We must not forget what is due to our comrades who have been labouring for us in the sultry climate of Zoulla and the pass of Komaylee, or in the monotony of the posts which have maintained our communications. Each and all would have given all they possessed to be with us. But they deserve our gratitude.

‘I shall watch over your safety to the moment of your re-embarkation, and to the end of my life remember with pride that I have commanded you.

‘R. NAPIER, Lieutenant-General,
‘Commander-in-Chief.

‘Camp, Dalanta : April 20, 1868.’

(The above Order is true in each and every particular. The General has not overstrained himself whatever in his composition. It is as simple and as modest as himself.)

On the third day of our stay in our cantonment upon Dahonte Dalanta plateau, the articles for sale were ready for the auctioneer.

The roll of the drum assembled all the officers and crowds of on-lookers around the piled trophies of Magdala, which covered half an acre of ground.

The auctioneer selected was Lieutenant S., an indefatigable officer who had been gifted by nature with the physiognomy characteristic of the First Napoleon. Fathoms of finest carpets of all countries were spread about, and all the paraphernalia of a thousand churches glittered in the morning sunlight ; and jostling each other in the characteristic confusion of mobs were the gentlemen buyers, who for the nonce were connoisseurs in antiquities, and displayed remarkable acumen in discerning tinsel from real, glitter from gold. The many things scattered round about, evidences of Theodore’s pampered selfishness or harem folly, inspired queer remarks from the vulgar-minded and the rude.

Bidders were not scarce. Every officer and civilian desired some *souvenir* of Magdala. One bought a cross of silver or brass, another a censer, another chose a sword. Goblets and cups, pixes and chalices of silver, there were in plenty ; silks, umbrellas, saddles resplendent with golden filigree, and starred with coloured stones ; tents, carpets, richly illuminated Bibles and manuscripts, trinkets, and jewellery found ready purchasers.

Mr. Holmes, as the worthy representative of the British

Museum, was in his glory. Armed with ample funds, he outdid all in most things; but Colonel Frazer ran him hard because he was buying for a wealthy regimental mess—11th Hussars—and when anything belonging personally to Theodore was offered for sale, there were private gentlemen who outbid both.

When Theodore's shield, used by him in his younger days, was offered for sale, though only garnished by a few silver plates, the bidding became very energetic, and from ten dollars it speedily went up to 200 dollars, for which sum it was purchased by Colonel Frazer.

Mr. Holmes secured many interesting articles.

The auction lasted two days. The total receipts amounted to 5,000*l*. This sum was divided among the non-commissioned officers and men who were southward of the Bechilo, which gave each man a trifle over four dollars.

On the fourth morning after our arrival upon Dalanta, the late captives started on their route home, under the charge of 'that best gentleman in the world,' Captain S., Commissariat officer.

From Dalanta camp Lieutenant-General Sir Robert Napier dated his despatches, which made known to the world the rapid and conclusive events that had transpired before Magdala.

*Return of Ordnance captured in the Magdala Fortress
on April 13, 1868.*

Three brass 56-pounders 5 in. smooth bore, one brass 18-pounder ditto, four brass 6-pounders ditto (Turkish), two brass 6-pounders ditto (English) cast at Cassipore, one brass 6-pounder ditto (French), five brass 24-pounder howitzers (native and French), three brass 12-pounders ditto, one brass 3-pounder, four iron 1-pounder howitzers.

Appended to the despatch of Sir Robert Napier is Sir Charles Staveley's report to the Commander-in-Chief, narrating the capture of Magdala. It goes over the incidents already recorded by Sir Robert, and ends with a list of names of officers brought under the notice of his Excellency.

I wish to bring the names of the following officers to the notice of his Excellency: Brigadier-General Wilby, who commanded the 2nd Brigade and led the assault. He mentions the very effective service rendered him by Captain Hicks, his Brigade-Major; Captain James, Deputy-Assistant Major-General; and Captain Capel, 12th Bengal Cavalry, A.D.C.; Major Pritchard, R.E. (who was wounded), the senior officer with the Royal Engineers and Sappers, and who mentions the able assistance he received from Captain Elliot, commanding K Company, Madras Sappers. Captain Poord, Lieutenant Bird, Cornet Dalrymple, and Surgeon Pearl of the

Madras Sappers; Sergeants Harold and Dean, R.E., Corporal M'Donagh, and Sapper Bailey; Major Cooper, commanding 33rd Regiment, who led this regiment to and over the gate. And I beg here to bring especially to notice No. 3,691, Drummer Michael M'Guire, and No. 949, Private James Bergin, 33rd Regiment, the two men who first forced an entrance to the extreme and turned the gate; Captain Elliot, who commanded the Madras Sappers; Captain M'Donnell, commanding Bombay Sappers; Lieutenant-Colonel Parish, commanding 45th Regiment; Colonel Field, commanding 10th Regiment Native Infantry; Brigadier-General Snyder, commanding 1st Brigade; Lieutenant-Colonel Cameron, commanding 4th (King's Own) Royal Regiment; Major Beville, commanding wing Belooch Regiment; Major Chamberlain, commanding 23rd Punjab Pioneers; Brigadier-General Petrie, commanding Royal Artillery; Lieutenant-Colonel Wallace, commanding division Royal Artillery; Lieutenant-Colonel Milward, commanding division Royal Artillery; Lieutenant-Colonel Penn, commanding A-21, Royal Artillery; Commander Fellowes, commanding Naval Rocket Batteries; Captain Twiss, commanding B-21, Royal Artillery; Colonel Graves, 3rd Brigade Light Cavalry, commanding Cavalry Brigade; Lieutenant-Colonel Tower, commanding 3rd Dragoon Guards; Major Gough, V.C., commanding 12th Bengal Cavalry; Major Briggs, commanding Scinde Horse; Lieutenant-Colonel Loch, commanding details of Cavalry; Captain Moore, commanding 3rd Brigade Light Cavalry; Lieutenant W. Scott, A.D.C., commanding the Commander-in-Chief's Escort; Lieutenant A. Le Messurier, Royal Engineers; Captain Leslie and Lieutenant Leacock, Bombay Sappers; Captain Bainbridge, commanding Land Transport Corps, who had the very difficult duty of providing water for the troops throughout the operations since leaving the Bechilo river; Captains Ross, Griffiths, and Twentyman, 20th Hussars, commanding divisions Land Transport Corps; Major Mignon, Assistant-Commissary-General, 1st Brigade, and Major Goldsworthy, Brigade-Major of Cavalry, acting as Assistant-Commissary-General 2nd Brigade; Dr. Mahaffy, Principal Medical Officer 1st Division, whose arrangements for the field hospitals were all that could be desired; Surgeon-Major Wyllie, in charge of the field hospitals, 2nd Brigade.

I desire also to bring to notice the officers of my Staff: Lieutenant-Colonel Wood, Assistant Adjutant; Major Baigrie, Assistant-Quartermaster-General; Lieutenant Saunders, 20th Hussars, Aide-de-Camp; and Captain George Arbutnot, extra Aide-de-Camp.

These officers rendered me great assistance in carrying out the orders of his Excellency the Commander-in-Chief during the day, and have served with me since my arrival at Zoulla with the first arrived brigade.

CHAPTER XIV

HOMeward—MARCH TO TAKAZZE—DEATH AND BURIAL OF LIEUTENANT MORGAN—THE ARK—THE PRIESTS' SONG OF THANKSGIVING—THE HEAD-WATERS OF THE GREAT NILE—PARTING WITH THE FUGITIVES FROM MAGDALA—STILL HOMEWARD REJOICING—QUEEN VICTORIA CONGRATULATES THE CRUSADERS—DEATH AND BURIAL OF THE EMPRESS OF ABYSSINIA—PRINCE ALA MAYU—KUSSAI'S GOOD FAITH AND ITS REWARD—HIS PARTING WITH NAPIER—THE GREAT FLOOD IN THE SOOROO PASS AND A MIRACULOUS DELIVERANCE—MY ARAB HORSE—HOSPITABLE FRIEND—MORNING—THE TENDER FAREWELLS—ON THE SEA—HOMEWARD BOUND—THE LAST OF THE ABYSSINIAN EXPEDITION.

ON April 24 the army broke up its encampment on the plateau and took up the line of march for home.

The British army, after the plenty that reigned in the camp the last four days, with the good rest, so necessary, that they had enjoyed, felt as blithe and merry as could be desired for a rapid march to the sea-coast.

And with all dangers, all anxieties removed, with home and its delightful associations rising before us, so

No foe, no dangerous pass we heed,
Brook no delay, but onward speed
With loosened rein;

and with the lively tune of 'Garry Owen' ringing in their ears, what could the gallant Irishmen of the 'Duke of Wellington's Own' do but spur

O'er the hills like hayroes fighting
And taying all before them,

followed by their war-comrades the 'King's Own,' the 45th, the 3rd Dragoon Guards, the thousands of Native Indian soldiers, and the thousands of camp followers.

The army was in excellent health when it started from Dalanta. There were but eighty in the dhoolies, inclusive of those wounded at Magdala and Aroje.

But the marching *en masse* by brigades soon exhibited the weakness of the animals, superinduced by the sufferings they had undergone in the Bechilo Valley. We passed the Jeddah ravine, and terrible were the effects the next day. Officers and men began to suffer from a relaxation of their whole bodily

system, occasioned by a removal of the objects for which the campaign was undertaken.

From Sindee we passed on unhalting to Abdecoom ; thence to Gazoo and Santarai ; thence downward to the Takazze, on the banks of which we encamped on the 28th of April.

At this place, the British army suffered a loss in the death of one of its most promising officers—Lieutenant Morgan, of the 10th Company of the Royal Engineers. He was a young and able officer at all times, besides being a true Christian gentleman. He was buried on the banks of the Takazze river, under the shade of pleasant, umbrageous trees which surrounded the church of St Gabriel. All the officers and civilians attached to the 1st Brigade followed the body to the grave, to pay their last sad respects to one who was entitled to the goodwill of all who knew him. The services read over him were very affecting, and those who stood by during the interment felt that indeed a bright soldier had departed.

Lieutenant Morgan was interred with all military honours.

In the evening we had signal evidence of the feelings with which the natives regarded the conquerors.

While we were marching southward, they held their fingers to their ears and their hands before their faces whenever the soldiers spoke to them of what they intended to do ; but now that they saw that the soldiers had reduced the fortress to a scorched rock, and dispersed Theodore's grand army of Invincibles to the four winds, they came out to tender ovations.

Their arrogance gave way before the stupendous fact that they beheld the conquerors of 'Theodorus.' They approached in masses to sing praises, taking for the subject of their psalmody David's thanksgiving psalm for 'powerful deliverance and manifold blessings,' which commences with 'The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer ; the God of my rock ; in Him will I trust ; He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my high tower and my refuge, my Saviour ; Thou savest me from violence' (2 Samuel xxii.).

It was chanted with due Davidic fervour. 'David played before the Lord on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals,' while 'leaping and dancing,' as Michal, daughter of Saul, saw him, girded with the linen ephod—with the people shouting with all their might and with the 'sound of trumpets'—so the Abyssinian priests, deacons, elders, and children of the Church, brought forth an imitation of the Ark.

Five yards was its length, a yard its breadth, and a foot was the height of this Ethiopic image of the Ark. It was covered with a scarlet cloth embroidered with gold, and on the top of it there was a semblance of the Mercy Seat—not of pure gold, but of wood covered with crimson silk. Above it there was a canopy of this silk, like unto a crown with rich embroidery round about it, with a border of two hands' breadth pendent from its sides.

On the Ark there were neither cherubim nor the shekinah visible. In these things the Ark was deficient, and came not up to the original. High above their heads were held the garments and the vessels, the candlesticks, the laver, priests' robes, hyssops and communion cups, pixes and chalices, crosses of brass and of silver and of gold, together with other officiating instruments denominated 'holy things.'

The head priest wore his ephod—a short vest without sleeves—over his stole, with the semblance of a mitre enfolded by an enormous turban round his head. The breastplate of this sub-hierarchy was a richly decorated square piece of tanned ox-hide.

The neophytes, clothed with their cotton togas, held the belts and kept up with him—to the intense admiration of the boys—a deafening jingling clamour; their instruments of juniper wood and brass, one-stringed banjos, clanking brass cymbals (stuck on the players' numerous joints), keeping time, as they advanced towards head-quarters.

Amongst them, chanting with vigour, were several arrant rogues. In the mazy crowd of dusky men, women, and children there was a remarkable paucity of honest faces. I fear I should be flattering them if I admitted that there was even one who possessed a soul which could have resisted the temptation of picking and stealing if opportunities had been forthcoming.

The inherent human failing to acquire things by superior cunning was stamped by nature on each tawny physiognomy. After all, the romance of the land had become stale with familiarity; no one in the army, I believe, could 'abide' to see one Abyssinian near his tent.

As the priests command by far the greatest respect among the natives, they of course took the front of the assembly. When they were all grouped in their respective positions—fifty paces in front of head-quarters—a strong-lunged priest struck up, with a serio-ludicrous air, the first note of the impromptu stanzas about to be sung in cur honour, descriptive of the Feringhee conquest over the Negus.

As he warmed in his theme, and his voice rose to enthusiasm, the motley assembly, at the waving of a crucifix, chimed in with chorus, which had a tremendous effect.

After the chorus, six priests clad in cotton stoles, headed by the sub-hierarchy, took the eulogy up at a very low key, which soon, however, rose so high and shrill in a protracted continuity of sound that one momentarily expected to hear their lungs crack, ending with a stormy chorus as before.

Then, forming themselves into a circle, a hundred of them commenced a dignified sailing round their neighbours to the right and left, their togas getting inflated with the movement, weaving each into another, until it might have been imagined they had manufactured some complicated knot on the Gordian principle; but, soon taking the reverse method, they reached their former positions in time. The singing went on louder and louder, and, the choragus giving the warning clap, the whole multitude clapped their hands; the women and children struck up the 'Li-li-li,' performing a dance similar to the Chinese hop and skip.

They then formed triplets, and massed themselves together, when a shrill note from the boys sent them all into a confused whirl, the sub-hierarchy and his six assistants going faster and faster, as they acquired momentum, clapping their hands, singing louder than ever, the head priest ducking his body lower and lower, and more energetic, until the dance, in the excitement which they all laboured under, assumed the appearance of a Jubilee medley.

It must not be forgotten that all this time the Ark and Mercy Seat—minus the cherubim—stood on the ground near the priests, while a choice number of infantine neophytes manfully rang the merriest chimes, and the instruments of juniper wood, the one-stringed banjos, and cymbals, made as much discordant music as was possible under the circumstances. The Ethiops, before concluding the entertainment, raised once again the *Canto Trionfale*!

Situated as our camp was, near the fountain-head of the mysterious Nile, on the banks of the Takazze, a dreaming stream, flashing and murmuring at our feet in the bright evening—the men's voices resonant, the children and women's voices toned in harmony with the deep bass, one may well imagine that there was a charm in the scene, that it was another event to be remembered in the drama.

One hundred and twenty-three mules, which were crippled and galled till past service, were presented to these people for their favours, besides an abundance of corn and grass which had

been collected during our absence, and which the army transport train could by no manner of means take with them.

At this camp we parted from the last of the fugitives from Magdala—they continuing their march towards Lake Tzana *viâ* Lalibala, while we jogged on northwards. While in company with the army they were fed out of the abundance gathered at each station.

There was no scarcity of food on the return. The garrisons, during the absence of the army, had collected stacks and heaps of provisions of all sorts; for when once the silver dollar had touched the palms of the natives, whatever they possessed became immediately vendible. It was really marvellous how the supplies rolled in, considering the insufficient tillage of the ground, the natural timidity and distrust of strangers, as well as the narrow band of country from which the provisions were raised.

Forward the army went rejoicing by the way from the Takazze to Muja—Muja to Wandach, over Mezgar Amba, bidding adieu to the Takazze Valley, and downward to Dildee, where we recovered our clothes and effects, and once more enjoyed Bohea. From Dildee to Marowar was a sore march; the mules died by hundreds. From Marowar to Lat, where the 1st Division had stopped for action on its way to Magdala—thence to Muzza-geeta—and next to beautiful Lake Ashangi, where the wide Syrtus on its farther side was smiling with every green thing!

At Ashangi we received news that the floods in the Sorroo Pass and Senafe Ghaut had begun; that the military road through the pass had been destroyed; and that there was every appearance that, now the rains had commenced in earnest, the road could not be rendered available for the passage of troops to the sea-coast.

Miles of telegraph wire had been swept away, and much hay had been destroyed. Various suggestions were of course started for the amelioration of the evil.

It was proposed to built huts on Senafe, wherein the troops could stay during the rainy season; and again it was proposed that the camps should remain as they were in the ghaut, and that each station should cook provisions for the soldiers by the time they should arrive—the telegraph to warn the respective stations of the hour the regiments might be expected. But these suggestions fell to the ground, on account of the difficulty of decision until Sir Robert was thoroughly posted as to the extent of the damage done by the floods.

That night at Ashangi we experienced a heavy shower which

made the tents very wet and cumbersome ; but by ten o'clock next morning they were perfectly dry, and the army continued its march. There was a large amount of forage burnt at the lake, the General preferring to burn it rather than distribute it to the wretches who had repaid his kindness with so much ingratitude. They had taken every opportunity to retard the conveyance of supplies to the posts beyond while Colonel Milward was practising his battery, the day before, upon points near the lake and on its waters.

The groves of Haya, on the southern slope of Mount Masobo, were reached three or four hours after we left Ashangi.

Here we met, on our return, the officers of the Trigonometrical Survey, Lieutenants Carter, Dummmler, and Holdich, Royal Engineers, who, by the most strenuous exertions and at the cost of great fatigue and privations, had succeeded in surveying nearly 6,000 square miles, carrying their work from the sea-coast to the interior, as far as Dalanta.

At Haya, though surrounded by wet dingles and mist and fog, our stomachs were gratified with port wine, brandy, and the pure Jamaica—the results of a necessary distribution of the hospital stores, as their carriage demanded more animals than any benefits that could accrue from their preservation were worth.

From Haya to Pilago was a short march, owing to the rains and mire. Five of the transport elephants were shot here because of their extreme weakness.

The next day the army left Pilago for Mukhan, thence to Atzala. It was thought that Sir Robert Napier, upon arriving at the latter place, would have thrown a few shells at the amba of Aleggie out of compliment to its owner, who had been assiduous in his efforts to retard the native carriage of supplies ; but Welda Yassous had fortunately taken wings and deported himself away, in which case any demonstration made against the amba would have been deprived of its effects.

From Atzala the prudent Napier marched his army still northward, unhalting, homeward. The pleasant glades and bubbling stream near Masheck were reached and passed ; the wild and weird amphitheatre before Musgee was seen as soon as we passed the portals of Aleggie ravine ; and the next day, to our great relief, the fortified camp and plain of Antalo dawned upon the view. We were halfway to the sea-coast. The rearmost brigade arrived at Antalo at noon, May 12, 1868.

The march from Magdala to Antalo proved very fatal to the animals of the transport train. The road was literally strewn

with them. Hundreds of mules died daily. Camels succumbed the most readily, and even the elephants suffered. The cavalry horses died by dozens.

The crossing of the Jedda ravine and the Dildee mountain, cost the lives of 700 animals. A single glance at a route chart will at once explain how trying so many consecutive ranges of mountains would naturally be to loaded animals.

From Antalo to the sea-coast, instead of the bungling disorderly mass that the army presented on the previous marches, it was to be divided, each regiment of foot and horse having its appointed days of marching.

Upon the arrival of the army at Antalo the following General Orders and telegrams, received from the Queen and the Duke of Cambridge, were read to the regiments by their commanding officers :

‘Camp Antalo: May 12, 1868.

‘The Commander-in-Chief has the highest satisfaction in conveying to the army of Abyssinia the following message received this day by telegraph.

‘Sir Robert Napier heartily congratulates all under his command on the flattering recognition of their services by her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria :

“The Queen sends hearty congratulations and thanks to Sir Robert Napier and his gallant force on their brilliant success.”

‘Camp Antalo: May 12, 1868.

‘The Commander-in-Chief has much satisfaction in publishing to the troops under his command the following messages received by telegraph from his Royal Highness the Field Marshal Commanding-in-Chief, and from the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for India, respectively :

“We all rejoice in your great success, and in that of your gallant and enduring army.”

“I congratulate your Excellency with all my heart. You have taught once more what is meant by *an army that can go anywhere and do anything*. *From first to last all has been done well.*”

These were the first blasts of triumph that were wafted from England to the interior of Abyssinia. Well might her Gracious Majesty be pleased to congratulate Sir Robert and his Crusaders ; well might his Royal Highness the Duke of Cambridge transmit greetings by cable to meet the army of Abyssinia. Though a little war, it was a great campaign.

From Antalo to Senafe the army continued its way without intermission. The only event on the route was the death of Empress Egenie Torenachie, relict of the emperor, from consumption. Very genuine grief was exhibited by her dependants at her funeral. She died on May 15, at Haikhullut, where she was buried. The military band of the 'King's Own' played the 'Dead March in Saul,' preceding the coffin to the grave.

The young Prince Ala-Mayu, which name means 'I am seeing the world,' was now left an orphan; but the Commander-in-Chief's intentions concerning him were in no wise changed—rather strengthened than otherwise.

The last of the army of Abyssinia arrived at Senafe on May 24. In spite of the monotonous journey from Antalo to this first highland post, it every day grew more and more evident that the campaign was drawing to its close; that the sea was nearing us, or that we were nearing it; and that once on the sea, Home lay not far distant.

Six months before, the army had left Senafe with nerves braced for what was to be done. Two harvests had been reaped since we had left this initial post, and it was the vernal period with every blade of grass and stalk of corn for the third time.

Prince Kussai of Tigre, whom I have unintentionally left in silence for so long, deserves one more notice from me. Loyal ally he had remained since first he plighted his faith by the side of that stream near Haussein. Whatever prince could have done was done by him. Constantly assiduous in furthering the British General's intentions, energetic in raking supplies of forage and provender for both man and beast, not a single dereliction of duty could be charged to him. Wagshum Gobazye had been as full of promises as the Prince; but his promises were, as a rule, but fruitless words. While in his country of Lasta and Samen, Sir Robert Napier could not say that he knew thoroughly the insincerity of Gobazye's friendships; but when the open, manly, sincere face of the Tigrean Prince and the recollection of his courtesy flashed across his mind, it is of course unnecessary to say that Kussai could claim the preference in his favour.

The second day after the British army arrived at Senafe, Prince Kussai, with a chosen body of 300 cavalry, came to bid adieu to the British army. He was rapturous at the great success of Napier, and complimented him with all the courteous phrases that the Abyssinian vocabulary admits of. He said he wished Napier 'all the happiness that Paradise can bestow, the applause of his countrymen, all the highest honours, plenty of wives and children, years of life, and a comfortable seat at the right hand

of the patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.' Amen! says the author.

There was another review held at Senafe in honour of the Queen's Birthday. For his good faith Sir Robert Napier was pleased to bestow a valuable guerdon on Kussai—especially valuable for one in his straits—namely, 1,500 muzzle-loading muskets, 'Brown Besses,' 400,000 rounds of cartridges, and six pieces of artillery with shot and ammunition to match. With this magnificent present there was no doubt that he would be able to make his own terms with the depredating Egyptians, who had too long been allowed to perform nameless crimes upon Abyssinians unchecked. Kussai, with the aid of several Europeans who wanted to go back to him, might now dictate terms to both Wagshum Gobazyé and the Egyptians.

I started down the Senafe Ghaut with five animals loaded with baggage and trophies, attended by as many servants, three or four days prior to the advent of the army within its confines on the return. Rayra Guddy was reached by noon, and after an hour's rest we continued our way downward, threading patiently the numerous angles and labyrinth of curves, until we arrived at Undel Wells.

The next day, after despatching a breakfast prepared long before dawn, we continued our journey, arriving at Upper Sooroo station at noon. Here we rested a couple of hours while the animals were feeding and our lunch was being cooked.

About 2 p.m. my little kafilah was on the road again, followed in the rear by two or three officers and their baggage animals, who were as eager to reach Zoulla as I was.

The heat at this time was intense, increased as it was by the incandescence reflected by the white walls of quartz, granite, marble, and limestone, between which the pass ran its crooked course. Two miles from Sooroo the extreme width of the pass is about 30 feet, and for five miles afterwards it contracts itself at intervals to within 20 feet, the walls of sheer rock rising to a dead height of 800 feet.

As we advanced, the heat became more intense, and I noticed that the sun had become obscured by drifting masses of clouds.

When about three miles from Sooroo, the premonitory symptoms of a storm had been noticed with much anxiety by the party in our rear. As we rounded an abrupt curve of the gorge we met a multitude of officers and men, numbering somewhere about a thousand, advancing to meet us on the run, as for dear life.

As we neared each other the officers shouted out for us to return to Sooroo, saying that it was impossible to proceed

farther because of the deep pits the cataracts had formed in the road, which had been left unfilled.

They said they had been busy with the working parties to try and make the road passable by the time the army should arrive from Senafe, but were obliged to retreat up again to the station ; for during the rains nothing could live in the pass, as it filled up in three hours to the depth of ten feet, sweeping on its impetuous course 'boulders weighing hundreds of pounds.'

The lurid clouds, the close atmosphere, and general gloom that prevailed, predicted beyond a doubt the approach of the rain-storms ; and, said they, 'It is impossible even now to reach Sooroo before the water will be two feet deep in the pass.'

Their earnest expostulations and the evident danger to be apprehended had the desired effect upon the officers who were in my company, and they retreated back to the depôt ; but I was determined to proceed, and my only reason for doing so was the fact that the mail steamer departed from Zoulla for Suez on the next evening, and a delay of half a day would prevent me from reaching Zoulla in time for making my preparations for departure, the distance being nearly thirty miles of roughest road. The officers hurried on their way, satisfied that I was a doomed man.

The Irish soldiers, at all times ready with their jibes, saluted me with numberless witticisms, to all of which I replied good-humouredly. They made up their minds that in about ten hours I should find myself in 'Davy Jones's locker.' Some of them seriously remonstrated with me ; but, I suppose, remembering the adage that 'a wilful man must go his own way,' they left me. The coolies sang out in chorus, 'Rah Naheen Sahib, Sahib—Rah Naheen !' ('There is no road, sir !') ; but when they saw that I was deaf to their cries, they also felt assured that they saw the last of me, and went on their way saying, 'Khooda hafiz Sahib !' ('Sir, may God be your protector !') I thanked them for their prayers, but nevertheless whipped my animals to a quicker pace.

The riband of sky, seen betwixt the two walls of the pass, assumed the blackness of a velvet pall, and, before the last of the working party had barely passed beyond view, the rain began to fall.

Down came the drops slowly, of almost the size of a dollar as they fell on the stones and pebbles ; then thicker, faster. The confined thunder, low, muttering at first, suddenly broke forth in loud peals. The forked lightning became vivid and fierce. The clouds unfolded themselves ; and the rain poured in an unbroken flood.

Forward for our lives we travelled, almost on the gallop, plunging into already formed puddles, leaping into pits still left unfilled, over round boulders, and smooth, slippery rocks, looking keenly around for some sheltering rocky ledge convenient for halting during the storm.

We were drenched to the skin in an instant, and the water dripped from us as if we were mermen. The luggage was also rendered so wet that it soon became evident that the animals could not carry their loads. The mule which carried the tent was already staggering under the weight, and the one which bore Theodore's carpet looked, as it were, suddenly broken-backed. The road became choked with streams. A current was created which swelled and raved and washed deep ruts in it. As yet there was not a sign of any place that could afford shelter to a mouse—the walls on either side of us were as upright as if constructed by line and plummet.

From each summit of these walls a few tiny slender strings of water poured downward of the colour of molten glass ; but before a second thought could have been taken, the tiny waterfalls had become cataracts which fell from either height along the whole extent of the walls, deafening to the ears by the terrific roar which filled all space with its thunder. This new danger made itself apparent directly ; Zahoorka, one of my Hindostanee servants, carelessly went too near the base of one of the cliff walls, and was caught by one of the cataracts, which instantly bore him to the earth, and the current, now ominously strong, swept him with the speed of an arrow over a lot of great rocks into a pool of water a few paces ahead of us.

By timely aid he was saved, but not before he had been severely wounded on the head, and had received serious bruises on the body. The pool of water halted my party ; we could go no farther. Upon examination it was found to be eight feet deep and fifty feet long, extending across the pass. A rocky platform, whose side and surface were worn smooth as a flagstone by the action of many a century of torrents, jutted about ten feet into it, leaving a space of five feet between the sides of the projection and the pass walls. The ground at its upper end was composed of gravelly soil, the loose friable nature of which offered no impediment to the powerful torrent that now flowed towards the sea irresistibly.

On this rock I massed my party. It was to us a very rock of refuge, unless the debacle, as the British officers said, should fill the whole pass to the depth of ten feet, in which case there

would be nothing for us to do but to swim our horses adown it at the rate of twenty knots an hour, or—drown !

While our minds were excited by the dangers which beset us, their nature and magnitude were not so apparent as now that we had found a halting-place, and were condemned of necessity to inactivity upon our friendly eyot. Our knowledge of them hitherto partook of vague formless presentiments, which animal instinct served to convey to minds already all absorbed in the problem of how to evade the effects of the flood. But now that we were providentially rescued from instant death, my mind was soon engaged in the analysis of the causes of this diluvial phenomenon. Here is not the place to enter into a detailed description of them ; let it suffice for the general reader that this sudden flood so powerfully disruptive—as we may be assured of when we know that it had formed a chasm of 800 feet in depth—is the collected rain from an area of a hundred miles in extent, and the numberless ravines that emptied their contents into this great pass, which is the main duct for the passage of the water to the sea.

Downward poured the rain unceasingly, and the thunder roared above, the echoes of which deafened our ears, multiplied ten thousandfold as they were flung from wall against wall, while the lightning illumined with its ghastly green flames the rifted edges and pinnacles of each colossal height.

Onward adown the path swirled the turbulent current, bearing everything before it but our own firm granite eyot, tearing the friable gravelly soil away by tons.

My Arab and Hindoo servants expressed their fears, and the wild alarm which had taken possession of them, in prolonged shrieks.

Still the rain fell unceasingly, blinding us with the spray. The current rose higher ; it became a river rolling past us in an irresistible flow.

To add to the horrors of the scene, corpses of men rolled by with outstretched arms appearing above the turbid waves, and carcasses of oxen, horses, and mules tumbled headlong ; telegraph poles shot past with lightning speed, dragging long lines of wire after them ; carts and wheels crushed against our granite islet ; bales of hay and yellow straw, clumps of bushes and again corpses of men all commingling in the turgid stream.

These ghastly evidences of the ruin and death created by the wild element increased the terrors of my servants, and their shrieking prayers to 'Allah' were heard far above the tumult of either tempest or flood.

After raining steadily for an hour and three-quarters, there was an instant's pause, when it recommenced more furiously than before. The water became level with the top of the rock, and was still rising; it touched our feet, and washed our baggage resting on the rock. The animals became restive and whinnied piteously, the muleteers prayed with unusual volubility, and I gave up hope. I felt certain that in a few seconds at most we should be battling for life in the waters, which were still rising higher and higher. But suddenly the rain ceased. The mist dissolved before the splendour of the returning sun, and a segment of the Bow of Promise was seen spanning the zenith! We were saved!

Within five minutes the cataracts had diminished into a few weakly jets, which soon ceased altogether, and within ten minutes the water had receded two inches.

At five o'clock there were but tiny rivulets where but an hour previous a river had flowed.

But how were we to descend from our rocky pedestal, the surface of which was four feet above the water? I had five baggage animals and my riding horse, with all the luggage, on an island in the centre of a pool of water eight feet deep. Most uncomfortable position to remain all night there, shivering in wet clothes; and, unless matters were hurried, it would be dark before we could get to the Lower Sooroo station, three miles below. As it was evident I should have to sacrifice the greater portion of the baggage, I at once set about selecting such things as I could best dispense with. So Theodore's carpet, which I had bought at the auction for fifty rupees, now of a weight of nearly 800 pounds, was tumbled over into the pond, though with many regrets at the loss of my money, the dissolving of my romance, and the futility of the trouble I had taken with it over a journey of 350 miles; then the servants' tent and half their bedclothes were discarded; a trunk full of clothes, curiosities, a lion skin or two; all superfluous camp-kettles. Two days' rations, and two other trunks, with their contents, I divided in light loads among the animals. My tent was next cut in two, and the poles thrown away, rendering the carriage of the canvas easy enough.

It now remained for me to get the animals away from the rock. They could not go of themselves, because the sides of the rock were perpendicular and as smooth as glass, and coaxing them into it proved futile. The plan had been tried, and it would not answer.

I was therefore obliged to have them pushed in so that they could swim for the road, which was but 15 yards below us. The

first one upon which we tried the experiment was an Abyssinian mare. She fell in with a heavy splurge, but soon came up swimming bravely for the shore below, which she reached in good order. The next one was a mule, a thick-skulled animal, and decidedly mulish in every way. It required the united efforts of all my servants to push it from the rock. In falling it turned a somersault, fell with a heavy sound, and never came up again—so much for incorrigible stupidity. The other three animals reached shore in fine style. Then tying a hitch rope to the baggage, it was all thrown into the water, and dragged through safe to land.

My indispensable adjunct Ali of happy memory, my Arab charger Sayed, and myself, were all that now remained on the rock. It therefore devolved on Ali and myself to remove Sayed from his rocky pedestal whereon he stood. Unsaddling him, and fastening the bridle well around his neck, we led him close to the edge of the rock, and tried to push him over; but this was an ignominious style of treatment which Sayed's noble spirit could ill brook, and with his heels and teeth he at once set about to inform us that he could not and would not put up with it.

After debating that question with Ali—who was a wiseacre concerning horses, especially Arabian ones—it was decided that the Sahib should ride him in. Now, I am a fair rider on a smooth, level prairie, or even on an Abyssinian road; but it is quite a different thing to leap a horse into a deep pool of water from a height, and it was with considerable misgiving that I mounted him—after, however, first seeing well to saddle gear—while Ali, in pure Arabic, had bestowed any number of endearments upon him.

Cautiously taking up the bridle reins and requesting Ali to jump in and swim away, I urged Sayed gently to the edge of the rock, and permitted him to smell and snuff and snort as much as he pleased for three or four minutes. Then backing him two paces and setting myself well in the saddle, I dug my spurs simultaneously into each flank, lifting him up at the same time with the bridle. The effect of the spurs on the blooded horse was instantaneous; he couched himself for a spring for one-eighth of a second, and like a panther he bounded off the rock clean into the air and into the turgid water. Sayed, after flapping his ears, headed for the shore, half swimming.

We had soon packed up again, and resumed our journey, the pass being now almost dry. After struggling over two miles of boulders, and pits, and flat rocks, the chasm widened into a ravine.

We arrived at the Lower Sooroo station about 7 o'clock in

the evening, just as twilight became night. An officer who was in command of the post came out, very much astonished to find that we had survived the dangers of the pass. The bodies of five men had been found drifting when the flood was at its maddest, from which the garrison had presaged greater calamities.

The hospitable officer's invitation to 'take a peg,' need I say, was accepted with many thanks ; but it was not until we had pitched upon our camp and built a roaring fire, and had gorged ourselves to repletion with a bountiful supper, drunk quantities of hot coffee, and had lit our pipes and bubble-bubbles, that we could talk and laugh at our ease at the terrible dangers of the Great Sooroo.

At 4 A.M. the next morning we were on the road for Koomaylee, and we reached that camp at the embouchure of the Sooroo Pass about an hour later.

Breakfast despatched, we defiled past Koomaylee, and emerged into the fullness of the day with the fervid plain of Zoulla expanding to the right and left, and for twelve miles in our front ; and beyond the snowy cantonment gleamed the azure waters of the Red Sea, where the great ships lay riding on the surface in magnificent array !

About noon we all arrived at Zoulla, glad at heart at the prospective rest before us.

Zoulla appeared very different from the complicated turmoil and chaotic disorder that reigned there when I first landed. Immense warehouses had been erected, which contained tons upon tons of stores and every known requisite for a well-ordered campaign. Bazaars were numerous ; and a half restaurant and half grog-shop, euphoniously named 'Annesley Hall,' had been built to accommodate the officers, suffering from the atmospheric fervour, which averaged 120° Fahrenheit. All the hospitals had been removed to Koomaylee, which was undoubtedly as good a location for a sanatorium as could be procured between the highlands of Senafe and the sea.

By 6 o'clock in the evening I had sold my baggage animals for a mere cypher, discharged my servants, and sent Ali and my Arab horse Sayed¹ safe on board the transport steamer 'Indore.' She was to leave early next morning for Suez, with Colonel Milward of the Royal Artillery, who had been chosen by Sir Robert Napier to convey his long-delayed despatches and the four crowns of Theodore to the Queen of England.

¹ The Arab horse Sayed was shipped to New York, where he still lives in luxury after his Abyssinian toils an honoured inhabitant of a luxurious stable

Our 'mutual friends' of the Commissariat, and Captain Dawes, Bunder-master, did the honours of a *recherché* table to the returned Crusader.

Next morning at daybreak the steamer 'Indore' got under way. The sun rose above the eastern horizon to accompany us on our voyage, dyeing the clouds above and around with an intense carmine-tint. The low sandy shores of Annesley Bay, the vast camp of Zoulla, and the great fleet receded in the distance, and finally vanished; but it was three hours afterwards before the gigantic heights of the Haddas and Hazorta ranges, through which the Senafe and Sooroo Ghauts run, were lost to the view as they blended indistinctly with the vast mountain ranges of Nubia.

The army arrived safely at Koomaylee, and came by the railway to Zoulla on June 1, having lost only ten men in the floods altogether. Eight days afterwards the different regiments embarked for Suez and Bombay, according to their respective destinations.

A month later the great camps had disappeared from Abyssinia; the transport fleet had spread its wings, departing for ever from Abyssinian waters; and thus the Modern Crusade became numbered with past events, to be remembered of all men, in all lands, among the most wonderfully successful campaigns ever conducted in history.

APPENDIX

STATISTICS RELATING TO THE TRANSPORT SERVICE

The following statistics in connection with the Transport Service were courteously supplied by Captain Tryon, R.N., the able Director of Transports:

Troop Ships

Number of arrivals in Annesley Bay	669
" " " at Aden of ships that did not proceed to Annesley Bay	19

Ships chartered	688
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Number of vessels arrived at Aden that did proceed to Annesley Bay	465
Number of departures from Annesley Bay	669

Total tonnage taken up at Bombay, Kurrachee, Aden, &c.	219,299
Total tonnage taken up at Calcutta	45,427
" " " " in England	30,225
" " " " at Suez	6,972
	<hr/> 301,923

Tonnage of Bombay and Bengal Marine Ships, including 'Semiramis,' 'Hyderabad,' tugs, and steam tank vessels, but not lighters	9,605
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Total tonnage	<hr/> 311,528
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Cost per month of transports, supposing that all the transports that were engaged were under employ at one time	£433,028 17 6
Amount paid for freight, excepting 'Vine' and 'Columbine,' chartered in England, as far as Annesley Bay, the particulars of which are not known	£10,710 12 0
Amount paid for line of bugalows at Bombay, and Bushire, to convey animals and fodder	£55,585 16 0

Animals

Horses	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2,538
Elephants	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	44
Mules	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	16,022
Ponies	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1,651
Camels	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	4,735
Donkeys	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1,759
Bullocks	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	7,071
Sheep	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	12,839
Total	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	<u>46,659</u>

Number of Troops &c. that returned. The following is the number of soldiers &c. conveyed to Bombay at the close of the Expedition:

Troops

Officers	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	369
European troops	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2,258
Native troops	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	9,606
Followers	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	21,896
Civilians	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	286
Total	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	<u>34,415</u>

Animals

Horses	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2,122
Mules and ponies	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	4,126
Bullocks	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1,075
Elephants	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	39
Camels	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	40
Total	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	<u>7,402</u>

MEMORANDUM

Showing the Amount of Sickness and Mortality in the British Troops, Abyssinian Expeditionary Force, during the entire Campaign:

Average strength	.	.	.	.	.	.	2,688·8
Average daily sick	.	.	.	.	.	.	156·62
Ratio per cent. sick to strength	.	.	.	.	.	.	5·8
" deaths	.	.	.	.	.	.	1·3

Casualties

	Officers	Men
Highlands	7	17
Lowlands	4	20
Total	<u>11</u>	<u>37</u>

Officers' Deaths caused as follows :

Diseases	Number
Dysenteria acuta	2
Insolatio	2
Vulnus sclopetarium	2 ¹
Morb. valv. cordis	1
Apoplexia	1
Emersio	1 ²
Febris continua	1
Angina pectoris	1
Total	<u>11</u>

Men's Deaths

Diseases	Number
Dysenteria acuta	17
" chronica	1
Vulnus sclopetarium	1
Insolatio	8
Febris remitt.	1
" intermitt.	1
" typhoid.	1
" continua	1
Hepatitis acuta	1
Aneurisma	1
Nephritis	2
Venenatio	1
Paralysis	1
Total	<u>37</u>

One accident, one suicide.

² Accidental drowning.



